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EDITOR'S LETTER



Empire LINE

Grown-up silk taffeta adds instant luxe, as you can see in the new Empire collection by Prestigious Textiles, from £68.99, per m. **01274 688 448, prestigioustextiles.co.uk**



Finally, it's time to start shedding some layers and feel the birth of new possibilities. Our homes are special places, and can help us become all we were meant to be. Check what you are bringing into your home and create some breathing space by letting some pieces go to new homes. If something no longer inspires you, let it go with love and see what happens

with the space created. Discover how the Victorians redefined interior design from p107, and explore two glorious Gothic Revival properties from p56 and p67. Then come back to the future and look at the best decorating ideas and colours from the present day!

Susan Dickerson

EDITOR

This month Period Ideas has been: **ENJOYING** the sunshine on muddy afternoon dog walks and the garden out with some encouragement from Sarah Raven; **GETTING EXCITED** about Sculpture Victorious, the new exhibition of Victorian sculpture at the Tate; **FASCINATED BY** Niki Schäfer's take on interior design and personal development. **LOOKING FORWARD** to meeting designers and makers at the May Design Series.

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Contents

APRIL 2015

22



119



95



Essentials

- 8 Home style**
Keep up to date with the latest designs and happenings this month
- 14 Garden Journal**
The best news, inspirational ideas and expert advice for your great outdoors
- 17 Sarah Raven**
The British gardening guru explains why now's the time to start planting
- 20 At home with... Kate Mooney**
Discover the hidden passions behind the founder of Occa-Home
- 37 Competition**
Win a Regency Swing Bed Gazebo worth £499.99 each from Greenfingers!
- 62 Life of luxury**
Win a glorious stay for two at Wyck Hill House Hotel & Spa
- 64 Antiques**
Margaret Powling celebrates the 100th anniversary of Ladybird books
- 67 Glorious gothic**
Get the inside scoop on a fantastic Victorian family home

- 134 Editor's choice**
Make the most of your home with our stylish selection of products and ideas
- 146 Lessons I've learned**
Kate Faulkner shares the secrets to adding an extension to your home

Real Homes

- 22 Riviera living**
Janet and Ken Hamilton transformed a tired and dated villa into their dream holiday home
- 30 European exchange**
Helene Allen infused her London apartment with a flavour of her Parisian dwelling
- 38 Belfast beauty**
Mairead and Owen Moore bagged the Irish house of their dreams
- 48 Living history**
Suzanne Dando tells us how she fell for a beautiful property that was crying out for some TLC

- 56 Country house rescue**
How a Victorian beauty was restored back to its former glory

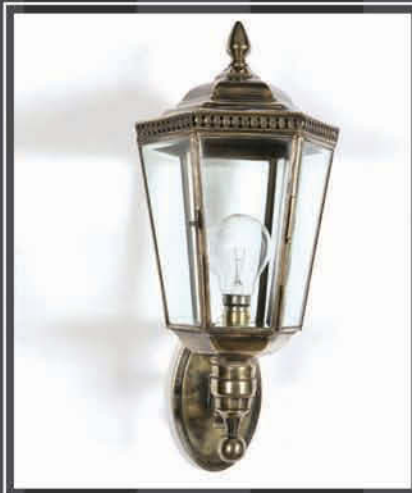
Interiors

- 10 Decorating with... tiles**
Add a dimension of interest with these versatile ceramics
- 77 8 things we love right now**
Celebrate Easter with pretty pastel accessories and seasonal fabrics
- 78 Going green**
Use this glorious spring colour to achieve a botanical look in your home
- 83 Create our cover look**
Replicate our classic country kitchen cover with charming accessories
- 85 The hot seat**
Comfort and style tops our list of tips for picking the perfect sofa for you
- 91 Slumber in style**
Our experts offer their advice on creating the sleeping space of your dreams



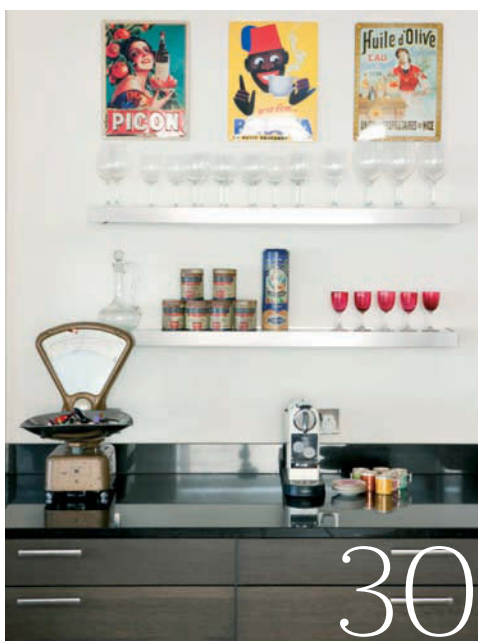
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- 93 April showers**
Get a round-up of the latest showers on the market this spring for the ultimate on-trend bathroom
- 95 Wash & go**
Susan Dickerson explores how to make the sanctuary in your home a happy place to be
- 96 Mid-century makeover**
Enliven your home with beautiful bright hues and bold prints inspired by the fabulous Fifties
- 103 Contemporary classic**
We explain how to achieve a modern day country kitchen

Renovating

- 121 Renovating news**
Read all about the latest need-to-know updates for owners of older properties
- 122 Freshen up!**
Banish the boredom of washing with a laundry room makeover
- 127 Outer space**
Find out how to make the most of your room outdoors with our expert advice
- 131 Hang on**
Make a dramatic statement with this season's light fixture of choice



Victorian special

- 109 Grand entrance**
We share the fascinating history of doors and windows as well as expert advice for maintaining them
- 113 Heat of the moment**
Find out how our ancestors beat the chill in the 19th century
- 117 Take the floor**
Keep your Victorian style up-to-date with our modern take on classic flooring
- 119 Eastern promises**
Discover how Victorian furniture designers fell for the Orient

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Pay just £6 for your first three issues of *Period Ideas* with free delivery direct to your door. Classic inspiration for your home and garden all year long.

APRIL'S ESSENTIAL SHOPPING LIST

HOME STYLE

*Keep up to date with the latest designs
and happenings this month*



RETRO RESTYLE

Bring some vintage inspiration into your home with this painted teal chest of drawers. Priced at £404, it has a scalloped front and distressed finish, and is perfect for creating a shabby chic effect.

0345 259 1410, artisanti.com



PETAL PERFECTION

Harness your garden's blooms by adding a floral touch to your interiors this spring. These Next floral curtains, from £50, and this watercolour floral rug, from £95, are perfect if your home is in need of a splash of colour. 0333 777 8000, next.co.uk



DAISY DAYDREAM

Floral motifs can work anywhere in your home, such as this quirky daisy food cover, priced at £9.99, from Gisela Graham. For details on the full range, call 020 7708 6396 or for stockist information, visit giselagraham.co.uk



CREATURE COMFORTS

At Berry Red, you'll find an abundance of charming accessories for your home and kitchen. We love these birdy glass tumblers, which feature a few of our favourite feathered friends, priced at £7.50. 0845 450 3937, berryred.co.uk

WALL TO WALL

Looking to update your décor? It couldn't be easier with this self adhesive wall mural from Pixers. Featuring a beautiful watercolour landscape, this spring-inspired view can be removed and reused every year for an instant focal point. 020 761 7545, pixersize.com



FAR & WIDE

Find a variety of stunning home accessories at Natuzzi. Its modern selection of furniture is influenced by chic Italian design and will give your home a trendy European edge. To view the full range, visit natuzzi.co.uk

PURPLE PARADISE

Make your home a mauve haven with this Chloe occasional chair from Alison at Home. The chair features a button-back seat and is upholstered in delicate, grape-coloured velvet for true comfort and sumptuous style. 020 7087 2900, alisonathome.com



DIARY DATES

Feeling creative? A short course at West Dean College this Easter could be the ticket. From imaginative drawing to making musical instruments, you'll enjoy on-site accommodation and child-friendly activities, making it the ideal place to improve your skills. Courses take place between 31st March and 9th April 2015. For more information or to book, call 01243 818 300 or visit westdean.org.uk

POPPY PRINT

This poppy canvas, priced £62, from Littlewoods, is just one of a number of pretty pieces from its spring and summer range. The paint-effect pattern is sure to brighten up any boudoir or living room. 0844 822 8000, littlewoods.com



GARDEN GLAMOUR

Get your garden in shape with Tesco's pretty range of outdoor accessories. This on-trend collection features subtle green hues, bringing a touch of style to any outdoor endeavour. 0800 323 4050, tesco.com

Decorating with...

STYLISH TILES

Add pattern and interest to your interiors with practical and versatile ceramics

Edited by **SEOANA SHERRY-BRENNAN**



Chalon tumbled octagon tiles in beige, from the Earthworks range at Original Style.
01392 473 004, originalstyle.com

Once restricted to bathrooms and kitchens, tiles are now making their way into other rooms of the house.

It's no surprise really, considering the many positive qualities they possess. Simple to install, durable and easy to keep clean, they work just as well in living spaces, particularly those that receive a lot of use. With a huge variety of striking designs and patterns available, you can transform your walls or floors with minimum fuss.

BLAST FROM THE PAST

Excavations of archaeological sites in Egypt have discovered tiles dating from 700 BC, while a vast collection of Roman roof tiles was recently found closer to home, in Oxfordshire. During the medieval period, tiles were primarily used in monasteries and palaces, with skilled potters travelling across the country to make them, using local materials and firing them on site. Holland was an important centre for tiles from the 17th century and Delft tiles have never gone out of fashion. English tile making flourished in the 19th century, as the Industrial Revolution meant that tiles could be mass-produced, and were consequently used in many public buildings and houses.

PICK 'N' MIX

Tiles are great for adding texture and creating interest in neutral schemes. With so many different options available, it's important to consider what you want to achieve before you rush out and pick the first tile that catches your eye. Working with coloured tiles is a bold move, but it will brighten up any wall or floor, and can also enlarge a room if you use the same hue across both. Mosaics are ideal for smaller areas, as the reflective surface will bounce light around and give the illusion of more space, making them the perfect choice for narrow hallways.

While it may appear to be a difficult task, tiling can be straightforward – as long as you are patient and do your prep. A small room, such as a bathroom, will probably take up to two days to complete. There are plenty of tools available to make the job easier, so do your research first to ensure you give yourself the best chance of achieving a perfect finish.

GOLDEN Rules

The first stage of tiling is measuring up, in order to work out how many tiles are needed. We spoke to Homebase, who helped to make the maths easier with their top tips:

- Measure the length of the area you intend to tile, then divide it by the length of the tile you're going to use.
 - Measure the width of the area, then divide that by the width of the tile.
 - Round up the number of tiles for length and width, then multiply the two results to find out the number of tiles you'll need.
 - Repeat the process for any other areas, taking into account the spaces taken up by doors and windows etc.
 - To allow for any breakages or incorrect cuts whilst you're tiling, add an extra 5% for wall tiles or 10% for floor tiles.
- 0345 077 8888, homebase.co.uk



Blue tapestry patchwork tiles, from the Odyssey Collection at Original Style.
01392 473 004, originalstyle.com

Dover white Victorian
floor tiles in York
pattern, Original Style.
01392 473 004,
originalstyle.com

IN A FIX

*Make sure your tiles stay
put with our guide to grouts*

Sanded: the most common
type, used for ceramic tiles,
stones and any tiles with a
grout joint $\frac{1}{8}$ inch or larger

Unsanded: commonly called
wall grout, can be used with
ceramic tiles and polished
marble, as well as grout joints
smaller than $\frac{1}{8}$ inch

**Latex modified grout
additives:** can be added to
sanded and unsanded grouts to
lower water absorption,
increase strength and improve
colour retention

Epoxy: stain and mildew
resistant, can be used on tiles
and stone kitchen worktops,
splashbacks and bathrooms



Online Inspiration

We've compiled our top tile looks to give you some ideas for how to use them in your abode. Head to pinterest.com/periodideas to take a peek and add to your own board.

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OUTDOOR IDEAS Best buys

Site to see

Give your garden a revamp by treating it to new furniture. At greenfingers.com, you'll find a huge array of pretty pieces, from garden benches and swing seats, to fab hammocks and sun loungers. With low prices and speedy delivery, there's no better time to beautify your backyard.



Lavender print cushion, £15; ceramic jug, £19, from the SS15 collection at Littlewoods.
0844 822 8000, littlewoods.com



BLOOM OF THE MONTH 'Bellis perennis'

Our resident flower fanatic Seoana Sherry-Brennan celebrates the birth flower for April, the daisy. "There are very few of us who haven't ever made a daisy chain – I for one spent countless summer holidays sprawled out in the park with friends, making reams of them. Although the daisy is seen as a weed by some gardeners, you can't deny the charm and simple beauty of this herbaceous perennial.

Representing innocence, love and purity, the daisy is also shared among friends as a token of loyalty and honouring secrets. The name is believed to derive from the expression 'day's eye', owing to the fact that the whole head closes at night and opens again in the morning. Daisies tend to bloom throughout summer, although they can continue to produce flowers in milder winters."

Safe enclosure

Protect your outdoor space with Saga's tips for improving garden security

Statistics show that garden theft has risen over the past few years, due in part to an increase in spending on outdoor furniture and cooking equipment. Keep burglars at bay by planting dense, thorny hedges such as blackthorn or hawthorn on your garden boundary, which are difficult to climb over or push through. Fix a trellis to the top of your fence – it won't support an intruder's weight and may deter potential thieves. Make sure you hear thieves approach by using gravel on paths and driveways, and install motion-sensitive lighting so that you're aware of any movement outside your home.

Seasonal shopping Garden Journal

The latest news, inspirational ideas and expert advice for your great outdoors

NATURAL SHADE

This spring, dye expert Susie Wareham is sharing her colour wisdom with an exciting workshop at the Garden Museum. Dyeing with plants will show you how to create your own beautifully dyed textiles, using only locally-sourced, natural materials. The hands-on course includes a walk round neighbouring Archbishop's Park, to forage for the best of the area's plants and flowers. You will then use what you have collected to steam dye an item of your choice, which will be supplied as part of the workshop. The class is £75 pp, and takes place on 25th April. For details on how to book, call **020 7401 8865** or visit gardenmuseum.org.uk



Wing wash

Wildlife World, one of Europe's leading wildlife habitat manufacturers, has just announced two new environmentally-friendly additions to its bird bath range. The company is committed to minimising its impact on the planet, and uses recycled and

eco-friendly materials. The Coniston birdbath, shown above, is made from a mixture of clay and recycled plastic. It comes with a low, push-fit base and a taller, screw-fit stem, so you can position it wherever you wish. The Blue Dipper bird bath is ideal for smaller gardens at just 270mm in diameter, allowing you to attract nature to your space, whatever its size. For more details, call **01666 505 333** or visit wildlifeworld.co.uk

RETAIL THERAPY

Feathered friends are flying into the home this spring thanks to stylish bird-themed accessories



HEART AND SOUL

This hanging sign will add a touch of romance to your interiors, £5, Next.

0333 777 8000, next.co.uk



TEA TIME

Embrace vintage style with a nostalgic tea caddy, £5.99, The Oak Room. **01992 501 040, oakroomshop.co.uk**



DRINK UP

An elegant Cath Kidston mug is the perfect vessel for your morning cuppa, £6.50, One Brown Cow. **01980 626 420, onebrowncow.co.uk**



KEEP COSY

Brighten up your kitchen with a quirky tea cosy, £20, The Wise House. **020 8941 8412, thewisehouse.co.uk**



DRY RUN

Chores just became more fun with a blue tit tea towel, £4.95, Dotcomgiftshop. **0208 746 2473, dotcomgiftshop.com**

BRANCHING Out

Acting editor of *Grow Your Own* magazine, Claire Holmes, offers her advice for introducing some healthy greens into your spring diet



CLAIRE HOLMES is the acting editor of *Grow Your Own*. For more growing tips and ideas, pick up the next issue, on sale 6th March.

EXPERT ADVICE



"Although there's something comforting about warming winter dishes, I have to admit that by the time April comes, I've had enough of soups and stews. So this month, I'm going to be sowing salads. Getting them in the ground now means I will be ready to harvest the mature leaves in about eight weeks, when the weather should be ideal for alfresco dining.

One of the great things about salads is the sheer variety to try from seed, and if you choose carefully, you could be enjoying leaves all year-round. For sowing in April, lettuce 'Little Gem' is a fantastic type to try. It has a crisp, sweet heart and tasty, flavoursome leaves. Plus, this variety is great for small spaces and can even be grown in containers – as long as you remember to keep your seedlings well watered.

Prepare the ground by removing any weeds and large stones and gently water the soil. Then, sow the seeds thinly straight into the area you want to harvest them, 1.5cm deep, in rows 25cm apart. Ensure you don't have a glut of lettuces to eat all at once by staggering your sowing from now until July.

If the weather hasn't warmed up quite as much as we all hope, you might want to use cloches to protect the tender young plants against any cold. Seedlings should appear in one to two weeks and, once they are large enough to handle, thin them out to 15cm apart.

Water well until the plants are established and keep on top of weeds. To harvest, pull up the whole lettuce from the ground and remove the stem and root with care.

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GARDEN GOSSIP

Sarah Raven

The queen bee of the British gardening scene reveals her planting advice for the month and shares a fantastic offer with you

From the start of April we will have tulips filling almost every bit of the garden, and in amongst these blooms I love to have wallflowers. They are the stormtroopers of fragrance and we pick them almost daily to transport their delicious, old-fashioned scent inside.

Cut wallflowers will last well if you sear their stem ends in boiling water and put a slosh of clear vinegar in the vase. That's a general rule to follow for most spring flowers. Many newly-grown blooms have a tendency to flop, but searing increases the surface area for water absorption, helping them to last longer. Try it with blossom, bluebells and hellebores too.

As well as gradually filling with flowers, our garden soil is now warm enough to sow straight into the ground. It's the perfect time to start beautiful annuals such as love-in-the-mist, poppies and marigolds. Place in a noughts and crosses grid, marked with canes, with the lines

spaced a foot apart. These will quickly merge into a block with no apparent lines and, if sown now, will be in flower in early June.

In the veg garden, the same applies with spinach, which is an ideal crop for sowing. Spinach does not like extremes of temperature, but April usually provides the ideal climate for it to thrive. My favourite variety is 'Medania'. This has small, tender leaves and tastes delicious raw or cooked.

Under cover, you want to sow cosmos and courgettes. With cosmos, choose a white variety such as 'Purity' or the deep carmine pink 'Dazzler'. I always aim to have at least one plant of all three colours of courgettes – mixed up together, they look lovely on the plate. Go for the healthy and prolific 'Romanesco', as well as 'Bianca', which is a gorgeous eau de nil, and the bright yellow 'Soleil'. In a small garden, courgette plants may take up too much room, so experiment with the climbing courgette

'Tromboncino', which you can train over a sunny fence or shed.

Courgettes and cosmos both have big seeds and can be sown into their own individual pots. Once you've done this, put them somewhere with a little bit of basal heat from a propagator, if you have one. Their germination will be quick in these conditions and you should see seedlings emerge in a matter of days.

Plant both courgettes and cosmos out once the frosts are over, in about six weeks' time, to fill your garden with flowers and produce right through summer and autumn.

Sarah Raven has been running cooking, flower arranging, growing and gardening classes at her East Sussex farm since 1999, and has presented on BBC Gardeners World. She also has her own website, where you can purchase flowers, seeds, kits and view a full list of courses, sarahraven.com

Reader offer

Period Ideas readers can get a terrific 20% off Sarah's seeds*. Simply visit sarahraven.com and enter offer code **PD15APR** at the basket

Offer ends 30th April 2015. Offer is only valid online and cannot be used in conjunction with any other offer. 20% discount can only be claimed against seeds. For full terms and conditions visit sarahraven.com/terms-and-conditions



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CHADDER & CO.

Period Ideas celebrates the best in British interiors

There's nothing better than a soothing soak in the bath to unwind after a long day, and at Chadder & Co. there are a wealth of beautiful tubs for you to choose from. The company is one of Britain's finest designers of luxury baths and is famed for its cast-metal models and commissioned work. After 15 years of experience dealing in antique baths, Martin Chadder forged his own way in the industry, taking moulds and making his own tubs, which combine classic style with the benefits of modern technology.

Martin used the latest developments in marine technology to form his own revolutionary material, which has the look and feel of cast-iron, without the weight. Named Chadite™, it is lighter and warmer to touch, resulting in a longer, more comfortable bathing experience. This practical alternative means you can bathe in antique style, without the drawbacks of old-school design, such as damaged floorboards, transport issues and durability. The company's wide selection of roll-tops was created from moulds of traditional English and French designs and are constructed from Martin's innovative material.

Inspired by the success of his baths, Martin developed the Chadder collection of complementary cast-metal pieces, including ornate

washstands, mirrors and accessories. There are a variety of antique pieces too, sourced from around Britain and imported from France. Each one is completely refurbished to the highest standards and finished to suit customers' tastes, perfect for period properties.

In 2005, Martin was awarded with a Royal Warrant from the Queen after five years of supplying bathroom goods to the regal household. His Royal Accessories collection features towel holders, double soap dispensers and a stunning bath rack, for a complete bathroom package.

At Chadder & Co. a bathroom is more than just a place to wash - it's a sanctuary, and Martin's team is keen to reflect this in its designs. The Chadder collection has recently expanded to include bright spring shades, such as bold pink and sky blue, which are ideal if your bathroom is in need of a splash of colour. Other options include

the limited edition Mother of Pearl range, designed by Martin's son Sam, featuring a tiled mosaic finish, while the Special Request range of taps and mixers can be made to suit customer preferences. With a stunning selection of contemporary and classic designs, Chadder & Co. offer immense style and true expertise, so there are endless possibilities for every bathroom.

01342 823 243, chadder.com



Martin used the latest developments in marine technology to form his own revolutionary material with the look and feel of cast-iron

Armed with a degree in architecture from the Glasgow School of Art, as well as experience working in her family's soft furnishings business and various architecture firms, Kate established her first company in 1995. Her hotel design consultancy firm was followed by hotel design specialist Occa-Design in 2003 and, most recently, Occa-Home. Now one of the UK's premier online interior design stores, her team hand-picks products from across the globe, selecting unique and irresistible pieces that will fill your home with style. From tiny boutiques to leading brands, Kate has made it her mission to track down the very best in home accessories from a huge range of sources.

Outside of work, Kate has three children to keep her busy, and loves to spend time in the kitchen, cooking for friends and family.

My favourite room is...

my kitchen. It may well be a cliché, but it really is the heart of our home. It combines a large cooking range in a central island, which faces a big, rustic dining table and leads into a den area. It's a great space for family dinners and is an even better party room – as my teenagers will testify!

The thing I like best about my house is...

the history and heritage combined with the contemporary spaces we've created. It's an Edwardian house with lots of period details, which we've adapted for 21st century living.

When I'm at home I like to...

cook and entertain. Whether it's Christmas dinner for 24, Sunday lunch for the five of us, or a casual supper for friends, I love spending downtime in the kitchen.

My favourite place in Britain is...

the Isle of Skye. It has many happy childhood memories and is one of the most beautiful and breath-taking places in the world.

When I'm decorating a room I always...

start with the floor plan and consider where the daylight falls and what style of lighting will be



Absorb ideas and inspiration and use them to create your own unique designs

appropriate. Then I work out how the furniture will fit, before deciding on the materials, feel or colour scheme of the finished look.

My inspiration comes from...
travelling, nature, architecture and the decorative arts.

My biggest style influence is...
Parisian designer, Andrée Putman. Not only did she design the first boutique hotel at Morgans, New York, she also had a timeless and effortless style that has worked in homes, stores and hotels for generations.

The current interiors trend I love most is...
copper – it adds a wonderful warmth and industrial edge to design schemes.

I think the next interiors trend will be...
a simpler and more honest use of materials and finishes that have a foundation in classical architecture and design. This

will result in a slightly eclectic but elegant space, which works with natural finishes and textures.

My top decorating tip is...
be unique. Absorb ideas and inspiration and use them to create your own original designs, which reflect your character and style.

The best advice I ever had was...
from my dad. When we were growing up he frequently reminded us, "There is only one person stopping you..."

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Above The villa is typical of the architecture in this region. Shutters in the domain must all be painted the same shade of pale green.

RIVIERA LIVING

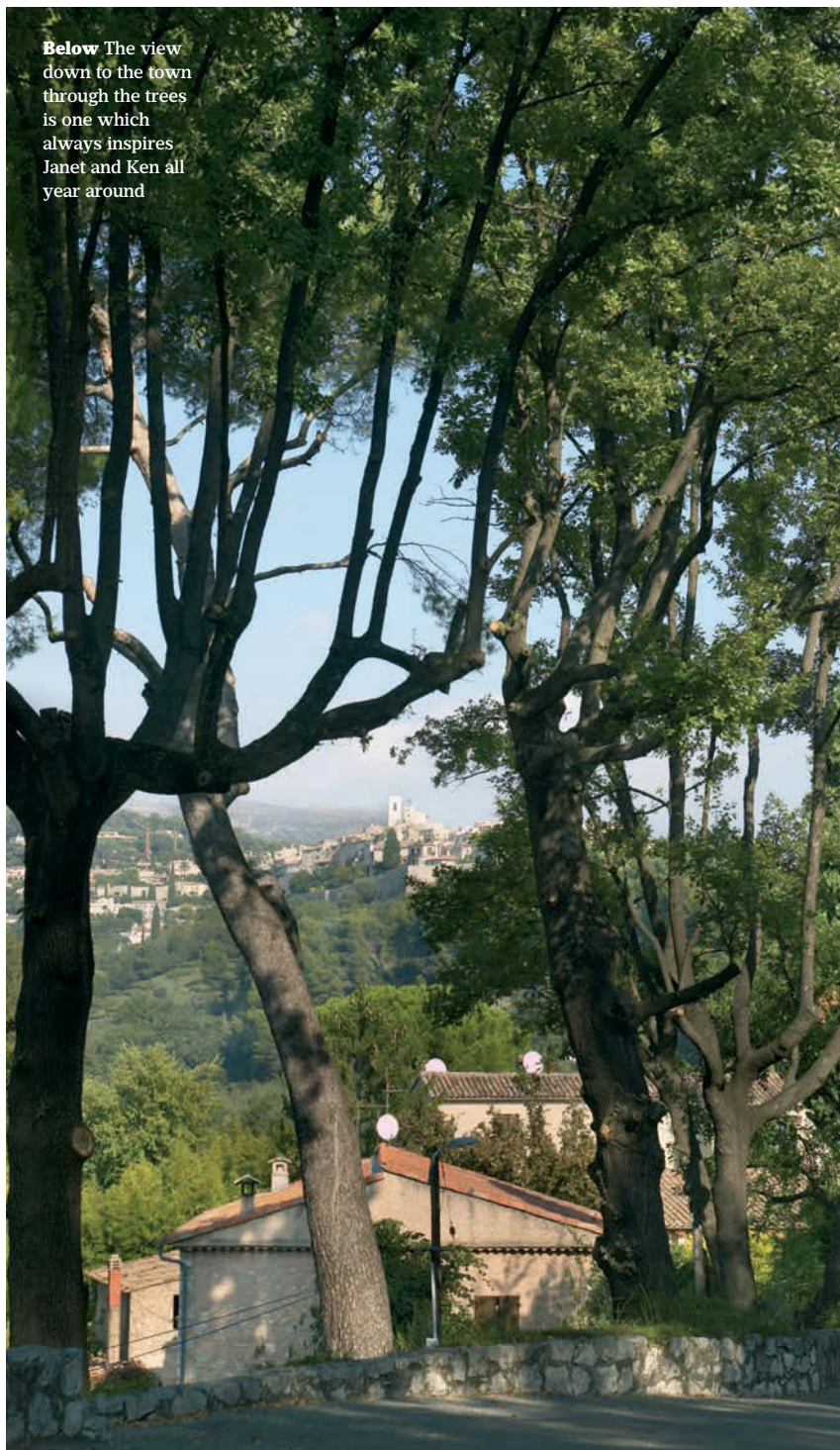
SAVOIR

Janet and Ken Hamilton transformed a dated villa

I can think of nothing
nicer than enjoying a
chilled glass of wine on
our terrace while gazing
out at St Paul de Vence



Below The view
down to the town
through the trees
is one which
always inspires
Janet and Ken all
year around



FAIRE

into their dream holiday home

Feature & styling **MARIE MCMILLEN/CHILLI MEDIA** Photography **ASHLEY MORRISON/CHILLI MEDIA**

3 | SHORTCUTS TO FRENCH STYLE

- Look for bargains in the local brocantes and antique shops – often they just need a coat of paint and a little TLC. Double check for woodworm. Antiques work well with inexpensive, but very comfortable, Ikea sofa and chairs have fun mixing old and new.
- Keeping the décor to a basic white and grey theme ensures that everything blends well and gives a harmonious flow to the villa.
- Introduce the occasional special piece – an antique standard lamp was expensive compared to the bits and pieces Janet picked up but she loved it so much Ken insisted on treating her to it.



Above The sitting room which opens out to a spacious courtyard garden is light and airy in tones of off-white and grey. Janet covered an old footstool in curtain fabric from Ikea.

Almost ten years ago, Janet and Ken Hamilton decided to take a two-month working holiday in the South of France. “Ken is an artist and I work on a freelance basis, as a management consultant, so neither of us are tied to nine-to-five jobs,” Janet explains. “At that time, we were expecting our first child, so it seemed the perfect opportunity to travel before Rose was born.”

The Alpes Maritimes region of France is famous for its stunning scenery and its quality of light, and has long been a magnet for artists. “We checked out lots of locations in that region and decided that the medieval hill-top town of St Paul de Vence would be ideal for our two-month sabbatical,” says Janet. There wasn’t a huge selection of rental property but they tracked down a villa within walking distance of the town. It was semi-detached and had originally been part of a hotel. They had a wonderful time and began to dream of buying a holiday home in the area, following in the footsteps of famous residents such as Bill Wyman and the artist Marc Chagall.

Four years on, with the arrival of Theo, Janet and Ken were still keen to buy a holiday home in St Paul de Vence. “We thought it would be lovely to have a place there for our friends and family to enjoy,” Janet says. “And we thought that if we could find something where we could add value, it could be a good long term investment – and we could also rent it out to help offset our costs.”

THE PRICE IS RIGHT

Buying a property in France is quite different to buying in the UK. A notable difference is the higher purchase cost. Estate agents charge between 4%–10% and it is customary to offer the full asking price – negotiating and haggling isn’t quite so prevalent in France. Once the offer is accepted, a 10% deposit is required, and matters are handed over to the notaire, a government official who acts on behalf of both the buyer and the seller. He is responsible for checking all legalities, paying the estate agent and collecting taxes, taking a fee of around 1%.



Above A beautiful antique mirror, carefully restored by Ken, reflects light back into the dining area and looks great.



Above The terrace has idyllic views of the mountains and St Paul de Vence. The little wrought iron table and chairs, are dressed with floral linens from Liz Gibney Interiors



I wanted a décor with lots of French greys along with authentic antiques, to create my own version of shabby chic



Janet began to look at villas for sale and discovered that villa in which they had first stayed had come on the market. The couple wasted no time putting in an offer and were delighted to hear that it had been accepted. The legal processes went through smoothly and three months later, Janet collected the keys to the two bedroomed property.

"I must admit I was a little disappointed when I walked in," she recalls. "The place had felt tired and dated." The terracotta lookalike floor tiles seemed very orange as did some pieces of pine furniture which the owner had left. The kitchen units were painted in a vivid yellow and there were areas of damp needing attention. Janet could see that the villa had lost none of its charm but needed some TLC. She decided to create her own version of shabby chic. "I wanted a light décor with lots of French greys along with authentic antiques," she says.

FOUR WEEK FRENZY

The family spent four weeks working flat out on the villa. Luckily a friend who was a joiner and handyman had moved to the area and was able to help. First on the agenda was the flooring. They decided to cover up the imitation terracotta tiles with limed wood on the ground floor. Once this was done and the walls were painted in fresh white paint, the villa immediately felt lighter – the dark beams in the living room



were also painted a soft French grey. "I'm a paint fanatic so I was thrilled when we stumbled upon a shop in Nice which stocked Farrow and Ball paint," Janet smiles. After a couple of coats, the kitchen was totally transformed.

The damp problem in the back bedroom was resolved, and once that work was done, the furnishing and accessorising began! The couple scoured all the local brocante and antique shops where they picked up some amazing bargains. Some of the pieces were in a sorry state and Ken's skills were put to the test. His piece de resistance was a fabulous mirror behind the dining table which he repaired and re-painted. Other bargains included the little armoire in the dining area which cost the grand total of 100 euro and, with yet more F&B paint, came up a treat.

"It was an exhausting four weeks but great fun and we were thrilled at the transformation," says Janet. In time, they would like to do more work on the villa. There's a little external store which might be converted into a third bedroom or study. Ken and Janet would also like to create a roof terrace but for now, they have created their dream home. "When the kids are tucked up in bed, tired and content after a lovely day at the beach, I can think of nothing nicer than enjoying a chilled glass of wine on our terrace while gazing out at St Paul de Vence – our little piece of heaven," Janet concludes.



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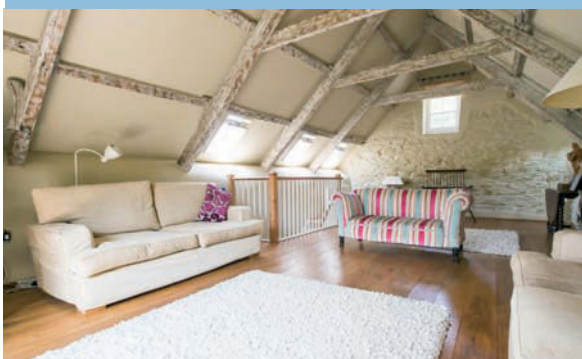
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"Everyone in the team lives in Pembrokeshire," says group commercial director, Sue Ravenscroft. "We live, breathe and enjoy the county ourselves and really want to help you savour the magic of south west Wales. We have been the leading agency in the county for over 25 years and we believe in looking after our customers, as if they were our best friends. Everyone has a best friend, so we always consider how we would prepare our cottages for the arrival of someone special, how we would advise our best friend over the phone if he or she had children or a dog, and more importantly, if something went wrong how we would react. We love what we do and we make sure we do it well."

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cosy cottages for two to fantastic family-friendly and dog-friendly cottages, we'd love you to see the options. Some of our properties have on-site pools and hot tubs, and if you want a real treat for a special occasion, why not consider one of our luxury properties? There are some great things to see and do in Pembrokeshire and our Coastal Concierge service can help to ensure that restaurants or activities are booked in advance so you can relax and enjoy yourself."

The county has a rich and varied landscape to explore, whether you want to enjoy gentle walks in the countryside or blow away some cobwebs by the coast. You might like to combine the best of the south west with a stay in beautiful St Davids, where you can revel in

the history of one of the world's best-loved saints and also savour some of the finest beaches in Europe.

LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

If you're in need of a little inspiration, visit the clear and easy to navigate website at coastalcottages.co.uk right now. You can choose from over 550 self-catering properties to find your perfect match and filter the results so you can narrow down your options with ease. Try searching according to your priorities, whether you want a sea view, a romantic retreat or simply to be close to local amenities. Of course, there is no substitute for local knowledge so please rest assured that the team at Coastal Cottages are available seven days a week to help you find exactly the right holiday for you. Do feel free to have a chat with them on 01437 765 765 and let your holiday adventure begin!

If you like to plan ahead, you can look at availability for various bank holidays this year and even get ahead by planning a Christmas break for your friends and family. Whatever you want, from a week of glorious walks with a four-legged companion or a romantic short break with your partner to celebrate a special birthday or anniversary, Coastal Cottages can help you think of everything from private dining to special hampers.



European exchange

How Helene Allen infused her London loft apartment with a flavour of her native Parisian home

Words & Styling **RENÉE GREEN/CHILLI MEDIA**

Photography **DAVID GILES/CHILLI MEDIA**





Above The clean-line Systemat kitchen is a bold, contemporary statement in an otherwise vintage scheme. The vast space is great for entertaining, with an extending table that seats up to twelve.

When it comes to property, many of us follow the old adage of 'stick with what you know'. It's easy to become overly attached to a particular style of architecture or design, and only invest in homes that adhere rigidly to this blueprint. We crave what is comfortable and familiar, and stepping out of our comfort zones can be a daunting prospect, especially with something as fundamental as a house.

For Helene Allen, breaking the boundaries and embracing the unfamiliar is something she is not afraid to do. Having lived in a variety of different properties, from a rustic farmhouse set deep in the Lille countryside, to a tiny apartment near Le Sacre Coeur, relocating to London for her husband's career certainly didn't faze her. Perhaps this is

because, wherever she goes, Helene takes the traditional décor style of her homeland with her. By putting her stamp on a property and bringing in familiar French elements, she is able to make any house into a home, regardless of where it is or how it looks.

THE FINAL CURTAIN

Helene and her husband Cedric, a regional manager of a technology retailer, weren't entirely new to London, having lived in a different area of the city for a few years. "We relocated to a 1930s house in Muswell Hill in 2007," explains Helene. "We transformed it from a three-bedroom, one-bathroom property into a four-bedroom, two en-suite bathroom home, raising the value to almost £700,000." Living

REAL HOMES **French fancy**



in the capital turned out to be a catalyst for Helene's career, encouraging her to channel her passion for French design into forming a brand-new business.

To furnish the family's former home in Muswell Hill, Helene trawled antique markets to source vintage French furniture and charming one-off pieces. She received such an overwhelmingly positive reaction to her collection that she decided to sell the property and use the funds to invest in a new business, Little Paris, which offers such homewares to the public. To give the fledgling company the best possible start, the family relocated to East London's design centre, Shoreditch.

"I have always loved this area for its joie de vivre and while it has been a radical change, we are happy," says Helene. "Maybe it's because our industrial furniture goes so well with the factory style around here!"

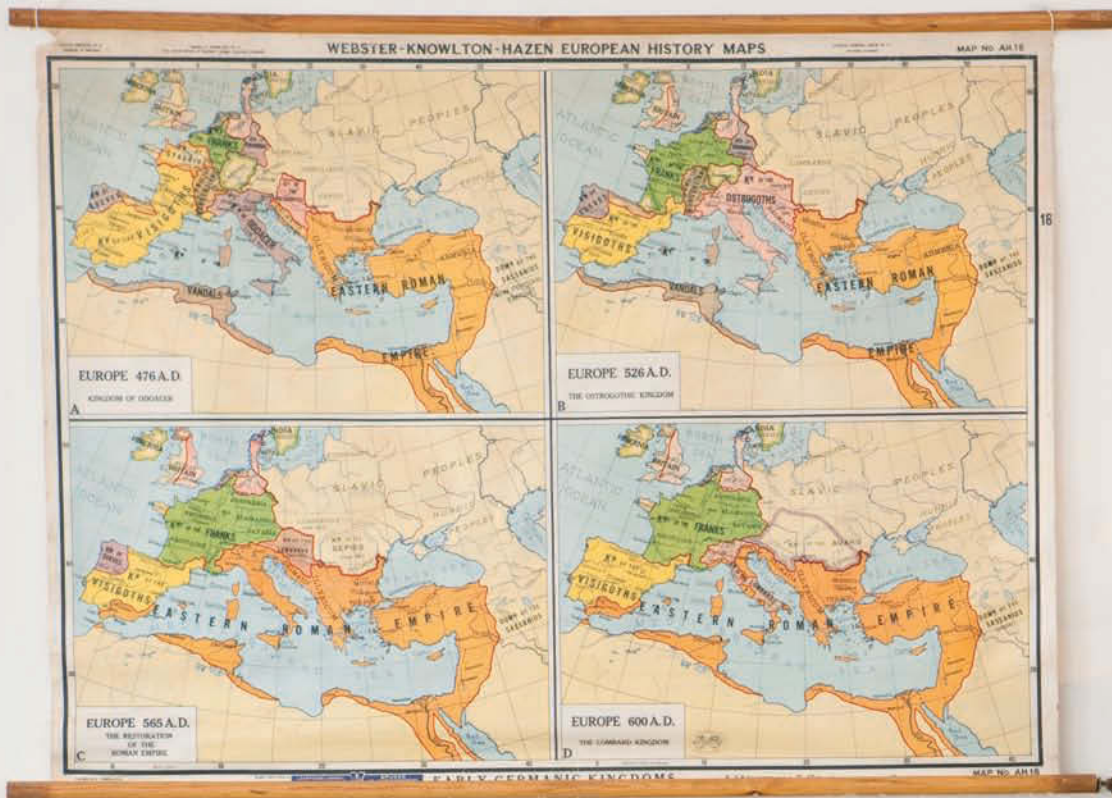
"We have co-owned this apartment with my brother-in-law since 2006, when we bought it as an investment," explains Helene. "When we sold our previous house, we were

faced with limited options - we didn't want to move too far from our work or the friends we had all made, but we needed plenty of living space for the two children, Tom, 11, and Emily, 9. Luckily, my brother-in-law was happy to sell us his share of the apartment and we decided to move in."

Formerly a curtain factory, the transformation into an ultra-modern loft was completed well before Helene and Cedric moved in. Together with Cedric's brother, they renovated the empty office space into a functional, stylish apartment. Planning permission had already been granted for the refurbishment, which involved a complete rearrangement of the internal walls. However, the development was not straightforward, and the trio faced some challenges, including a dispute with the original architect and major issues with installing a domestic water system. "We were left with no choice but to employ a new architect and, after much discussion, we had to elevate the kitchen and bathrooms to assist the water flow. This all added greatly to the length and cost of the project," Helene explains.

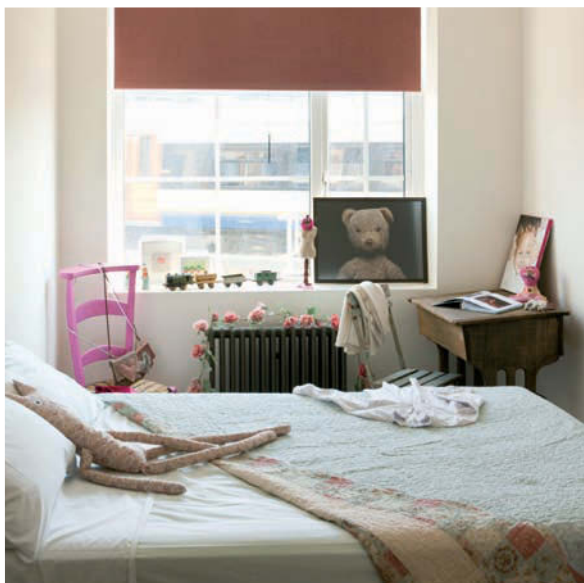
Above This former office is blessed with a wall of large windows, which are covered by sheer roller blinds to allow as much light into the space as possible. The light walls and dark oak floors form the ideal backdrop for Helene's French vintage three-seater and armchair.





Passionate about recycling and salvage, Helene can't resist collecting pieces for her own home when she is sourcing for her business





Above Hanging on the wall of the master bedroom are a pair of antique leather boxing gloves, which Helene discovered in a flea market. They were once worn by the late actor Guillaume Depardieu in a boxing film.

INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

The apartment was initially designed as a rental property, so the key was to create a versatile and durable backdrop that would suit most living styles and uses. "If I was starting from scratch today, I would probably select a French reconditioned industrial kitchen and I'd definitely use reclaimed flooring.

But I'm surprised at how well the space works, especially the floor and the modern kitchen. Adding my vintage furnishings into the mix has just made it more interesting," Helene says.

The industrial theme continues throughout the rest of the apartment, and is an endearing tribute to the history of the building. In the master bedroom, a metal set of drawers provide a masculine contrast to the softness of the bedding. Once it would have stood at the heart of a factory floor, surrounded by the chaos and hubbub of a thriving business, it now houses Helene's trinkets.

Passionate about recycling and salvage, Helene can't resist collecting pieces for her own home when she is

sourcing pieces for her business. The best example is the three-seater and armchair set, which she recently discovered at a market in Le Touquet. "The upholstery had fallen apart and it was in a terrible state. Despite this, I stood with the trader until my husband returned with the money as I couldn't risk losing it!" she says.

Alongside the flea market finds and salvaged treasures, some of Helene's old toys and items from her grandparents' home in southwest France now live in her daughter's room. "I wanted to pay homage to my childhood memories and pass these on to my children," she says. "I love the sense of history attached to certain objects and want to retain a piece of their past."

To fill your home with French delights or to discover more about Helene's style, head to littleparis.co.uk

SHOPPING SOS

When it comes to tracking down vintage treasures, Helene has a few tricks of the trade that guarantee you won't come home empty-handed.

From French flea markets to specialist vintage traders, Helene often comes across items that she simply has to display. Even if she isn't entirely certain about where the piece will go, she never leaves anything she loves behind. "Always buy something you like because otherwise you'll miss it," explains Helene. "When it comes to vintage and reclaimed items, you often don't get a second chance, so worry about where it will go later! You should never show the seller how much you like an item though - they will definitely inflate the price if they know that you really love it."





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Luckily, Greenfingers.com, the UK's number one online destination for garden supplies, is on hand to help you spruce up your outdoor space. The company has recently expanded its furniture range, so whether you're looking to unwind on a swing seat, or enjoy a glass of wine while relaxing on a stylish new rattan dining set, there is something to suit everyone.

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For the chance to win these incredible prizes, turn to page 138 or head to periodideas.com and answer the following question:

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TERMS AND CONDITIONS

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CLOSING DATE: 10th April 2015

Mix & MATCH

Mairead and Owen Moore beat the bargain-hunters and bagged the Irish home of their dreams

Words **MARIE MCMILLEN** Photography **ASHLEY MORRISON**

With a variety of trendy bars, coffee shops and award-winning restaurants, it's clear why Mairead and Owen Moore were up against tough competition every time their ideal home appeared on the market in the charming city of Belfast. When they began house-hunting, the couple had a clear vision of the type of property they were after, but when it came to buying it, tenacious bidders thwarted their attempts at every turn. As busy doctors, they both wanted a place they could really relax in after work, but every other buyer in Belfast was eager to find the same – snapping up the classic period terraces as soon as they became available.

The bidding wars took their toll and after numerous buys fell through, it's no surprise the Moores nearly came to the end of their tether. "After being out-bid on a number of occasions, we wondered if things were ever going to come together," says Mairead. "There just seemed to be so much competition for this type of property around here – a period house in a university city." Homes in the area were certainly in high demand, not only because of the convenience of living in a university town, but because of the modern attractions and leisure facilities located close by. The area was rapidly growing in popularity which meant properties were becoming harder to come by for Mairead and Owen, and the ones that did didn't remain on the market for very long.

Thankfully, their arduous search drew to a close when a friend, who was living in a neighbouring house, tipped them off about a property that had recently come onto the market. "A friend of ours lived in the same avenue as this house and was able to tell us as soon as they heard it was going up for sale, which helped us get in early," tells Mairead. This helpful hint enabled them to get ahead of the bidders and this time, the couple weren't leaving anything to chance. Determined to triumph, they cut to the chase as soon as they could, not willing to risk the property for the sake of a few thousand pounds. "We'd been disappointed on so many other occasions over the previous year that we decided to leap straight in with the asking price this time rather than entering a bidding war – and thankfully the vendors accepted."

PERFECT CATCH

It was a superb match for Mairead and Owen. During their student days and early working lives, the couple fell for the grand proportions of Victorian houses and rented mainly period lets. This house was elegant, stylish and built with striking characteristics, which really won them over. "We both appreciate the sense of scale in these houses and this one still had virtually all of its original features, which was a bonus. We particularly loved the beautiful fireplaces and decorative tiles in the rooms," says Mairead.

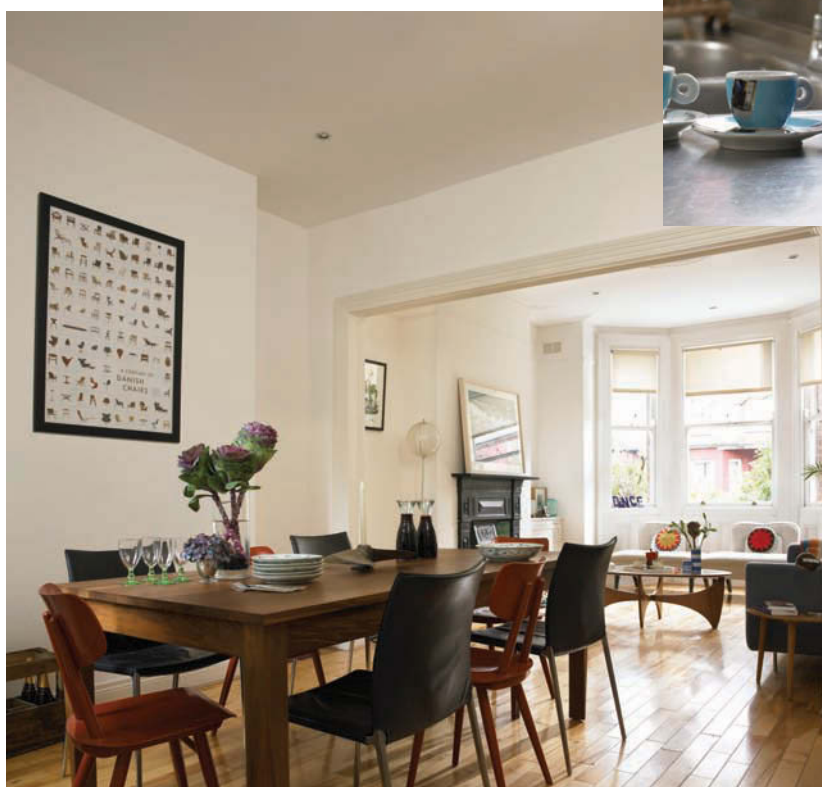
The Moores couldn't deny how taken they were with the property, and the icing on the cake was the sound structure

Right This spacious living room was exactly what the Moores had in mind for their first buy. It captures the quintessential period style which they both love, whilst allowing them to put their own stamp on it.





The house was elegant, stylish and built with striking characteristics, which really won the couple over



BATTLE IT OUT

Bidding wars can be the make or break aspect of house-hunting, so when it comes down to it, make sure you have a clear idea of your budget beforehand. Like the Moores, being outbid several times can leave you feeling disheartened - but don't give up! As long as you know your limits and keep a clear head in a bidding war, you're sure to find your perfect property.



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and in-tact foundations. While the style may have been spot on, it was equally important that the house didn't need any major refurbishment. "We were property virgins at that stage and because of heavy work commitments we didn't want to take on a really involved project. Here was a charismatic Victorian house which offered us a blank canvas we could put our stamp on without getting into gruelling building work."

STYLE STASH

The couple were anxious to start transforming the house into their home by filling it with their unusual style – something Mairead had been thinking about for a while. "I've always had an interest in interiors and I have a huge tea-chest filled with back issues of home magazines to prove it – I keep them all as I can't bear to part with them," she says. In between hectic work commitments, Mairead used this hoard of reading material as inspiration for the house's décor. "I hate to miss an episode of *Location, Location, Location*," she jokes. "I really envy Kirsty Allsopp's job!"

Mairead's avid research certainly paid off in the bathroom and kitchen, where she had a specific scheme in mind. "I wanted to decorate both rooms in an industrial style. The kitchen design was part of the appeal of the house, especially the flooring, which we'd seen in the hospital where we'd worked. It looked particularly striking in the domestic setting," she says. With that in mind, she stuck to her plan and featured dark rubber flooring in the kitchen and white metro tiles with granite coloured grouting in the bathroom, enhancing the contemporary metallic theme.

PICK 'N' MIX

In the rest of the house, the Moores took the decoration in a different direction, allowing their passion for vintage styles to flourish. Mairead frequently trawled antique shops to find the pieces she wanted, which was a real pleasure for her.



Below The bathroom was the biggest project for the Moores and has given them the confidence to tackle more work in their next home. The white emulsified flooring retains the clean, minimalist theme.



REAL HOMES Belfast beauty



She spent her lunch hour snapping up vintage treasures in shops close to her work. She found everything they needed, from wall brackets to a free-standing roll-top bath, ideal for personalising the property.

"Some people might think my style is a bit of a mishmash, but if I had to describe it, I'd say I like classic, retro themes with minimal clutter," says Mairead. "I love mid-century designs, so browsing vintage and antique shops is a great way to find lovely one-off pieces in this style."

OLD AND NEW

The couple attribute the successful schemes to their eclectic range of furniture and spontaneous approach to decorating. "The Danish coffee table in the ground floor living room is a classic that Owen inherited from his grandmother. We found a coffee table for the upstairs drawing room in Ikea which

worked well there - I have no problem using the two sources in one scheme," Mairead explains. "The chest of drawers in the main bedroom was a bargain from OXFAM and the blue sofa in the downstairs living room is an Italian designer piece - again there's no conflict."

But the hunt is far from over for Mairead and Owen - just as they began to relish in their home after their hard work, the couple are on the move again. Exciting work opportunities are taking them to Melbourne in Australia for the next few months, meaning they'll have to leave their unique home behind. "We're looking forward to the new challenges in Australia, but our experience with this house has really given us a taste for property development too. We'd definitely like to tackle another project at some stage - maybe even be a little bit braver next time!"

Left Mairead adores the sense of nostalgia evoked by the old Bakelite red phone, demonstrating her passion for vintage-style furnishings and home accessories.





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Nestled in a hidden valley in the wilds of Dorset is Flyte so Fancy – the renowned maker of beautiful poultry houses. Whether it's gagging geese or clucking chickens you're looking to home, the company provides a wealth of options for feathered friends, all carefully created in the company workshop by experienced craftsmen.

FROM THE HEART

Flyte so Fancy's reputation has flourished in the chicken-keeping industry during the last decade, and it now has an extraordinary flair for producing coops which exceed their function. They are designed not only to aid the tending of birds, but to complement homes and gardens too. "We design our housing with a lot of thought," says Phillip Weymouth, owner of this growing company. All of its timber is sourced from one family mill in Sweden, and they ensure that only the finest fixtures and fittings are used for every product. "After over 30 years

of experience in poultry-keeping ourselves, we have tried to provide hen houses that are both beautiful and practical, as well as more utilitarian options for city gardens with limited space." The generations of chicken-keeping that is behind the business means that each house is built with great insight into the physical elements of caring for poultry and making the most of the space available.

OUT OF THIS WORLD

The business is famed for one particularly splendid model, which won the best trade stand award at the RHS Hampton Court Show in 2012. The pair then collaborated again for a charity event at the show, in 2013. The Gypsy Daydream is the most luxurious of its kind, with a shape inspired by Romany caravans. It's specially painted by a local artisan, who works with the company to offer a unique service, decorating the house according to customers' preferences. This attractive bird home is

steerable and functional, with removable perches, a dirt tray and an external nest box for easy egg collection. Adorned with marine brass fittings and hand-made solid steel wheels and handles, this chocolate-box coop is a great garden feature as well as a handy hen house.

The Fantasia is equally impressive, with faded edges, a curved slate roof and an intertwining rose design. Inspired by fairy-tales, this quirky home will benefit your fowl with its spacious design – there's room for up to eight birds to comfortably flutter and lay their eggs. It also features removable perches and an external nest box, and is easy to clean and maintain.

With poultry welfare and maintenance at the heart of the business, Flyte so Fancy is the perfect place to find a home for your hens, or any other bird. There's a variety of options available for you, your birds and your garden – so caring for your creatures couldn't be easier. "With one of our hen houses," says Phillip, "you really can keep a few chickens anywhere!"





PERIOD DRAMA

LIVING HISTORY

Suzanne Dando tells us how she fell for a beautiful property that cried out for tender, loving care

Words **PAT GARRATT/CHILLI MEDIA**

Photography **DAVID GILES/CHILLI MEDIA**



Left Everything about Suzanne and Adam's house evokes comfort and style. There's plenty of room for their dogs plus Suzanne can keep her four chickens, Freda, Myrtle, Lucy and Mimi outside in the gorgeous grounds.

We've all admired a gorgeous house just around the corner and imagined living there, but Suzanne Dando has made this dream come true. When she lived in a small cottage a few fields away from her current home, she often passed by and admired its classic, Cotswold good looks. Standing in the centre of a north Oxfordshire village, the house boasted golden stonework and ornately framed, mullioned windows and had been an important house in the local area. When Suzanne and her husband, Adam Reynolds, a corporate financier in the City, decided to move to a larger property and found that it was on the market, they jumped at the chance to buy this five bedrooomed Grade II listed home. The oldest part of the building dates back to the early 1500s and after a chimney fire, much of the house was re-built in 1705.

"It was in a liveable state," remembers Suzanne, an interior decorator with Sydney Vernon Interiors. (She is also a Sky sports presenter and former Olympic gymnast). "But many of

the rooms hadn't been used for years and there was no mains water. Instead there was a private feed from a natural spring, which we still use for watering the garden. All the floorboards needed lifting and renewing and the place had to be re-wired. As there was no damp proof course, every flagstone in the kitchen and breakfast room had to be lifted and numbered before being put back. We also needed to make a hole in the kitchen wall to create a door into an old storage room that we converted into a utility area." The couple were lucky enough to be able to remain in Suzanne's old cottage and Adam's London home during the renovations, which took about 18 months to complete.

HAMMERING IT OUT

Despite the drawbacks, the couple made some serendipitous discoveries. For instance, the fireplace in the drawing room had been boxed in and covered with a small, electric fire. "I knew there had to be something else underneath, probably an



STYLE ADVICE

We're always inspired by Hidcote Manor, at National Trust property near Chipping Camden. I love its gardens created by Major Lawrence Johnson over a period of 40 years from 1907. Every time I visit I find yet another idea for our gardens at home.





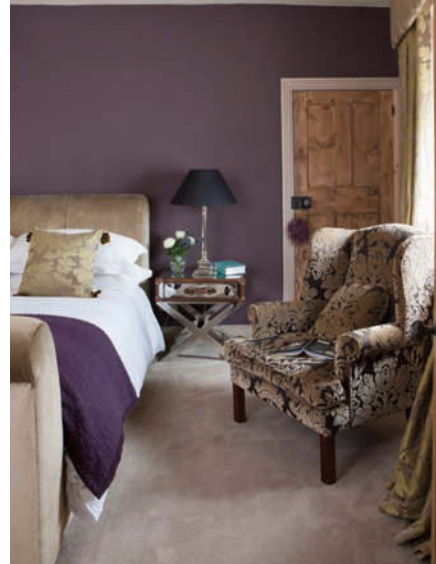


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inglenook similar to the one in the breakfast room," says Suzanne. "One evening Adam and I got busy with the sledgehammer!" Her instincts proved correct and the result is an eyecatching fireplace with a stone surround and a magnificent beam to support the chimney. Other unexpected discoveries included some wonderful oak doors, hidden under centuries of paper and paint, and an ice house so ancient that it attracted the interest of the local archaeological society.

When it came to decorating, Suzanne had definite ideas of her own. "I wanted to retain the house's character and history," she says. "But I also wanted to bring it into the 21st century by making it liveable and manageable." Sumptuous, tactile fabrics in strong colours are Suzanne's hallmark and she loves using deep purples, clarets and aquas on upholstery and throws. "I had to be careful, though, as some rooms are quite dark so I have tried to lift them by using light paint colours." She is devoted to the depth of colour and chalkiness provided by heritage paint companies such as Farrow & Ball and Fired Earth. "Unlike today's brilliant whites, the whites made by these companies " she says.

HEART OF OAK

Some rooms, including the family sitting room, already had such a strong personality with original oak panelling and romantic stone windows, that they cried out for a simple, decorative treatment. Suzanne opted for classic fabrics such as silk voile for the curtains and traditional furniture with a modern twist, such as the large buttoned ottoman/coffee table which she found in Paris. Despite its grandeur, this is a much-used room. "It's cosy and comfy with a wonderful ambience. If we want a quiet evening in, watching the TV, this is where we sit," says Suzanne. Other areas, such as the drawing

room/piano room, had plastered walls so they could handle with a more contemporary approach. Suzanne choose a dramatic black velvet to cover the generous and inviting sofa and the armchairs were upholstered in a deep burgundy, scrolled fabric.

Several pieces of furniture transferred happily from the couple's previous homes, including two armchairs which came from Adam's London house and a beige, drop-end sofa from Suzanne's cottage, which were re-covered and comfortably ensconced in the breakfast room. Relaxed and rustic, this part of the house "is also very much the dogs' domain!" admits Suzanne. "We don't always give them the full run of the house." Despite her love of the new, the house's sense of history that appeals most to Suzanne. "I always believe that we are just custodians of beautiful buildings like these. I hope that future generations will feel the same."

Above The bedrooms in Suzanne's house are simply styled but crammed with gorgeous touchy-feely textures from sheepskin rugs and leather. Natural stone is a prominent and charming feature in the bathroom.

HISTORICAL DETAILS

Make the most of period architecture with careful lighting and the rich use of colour

The oak panelling in Suzanne's drawing room probably came from another property and allegedly dates from the time of King Henry VIII, when he dissolved the monasteries. She had the wood French polished to bring out its beautiful texture and lustre. She opted for well-placed table lamps and ceiling lighting with dimmer switches as she finds overhead lights can be too harsh. To contact Suzanne and find out more about her decorating ideas visit sydneyvernon.com

ACQUISITIONS

est. 1974

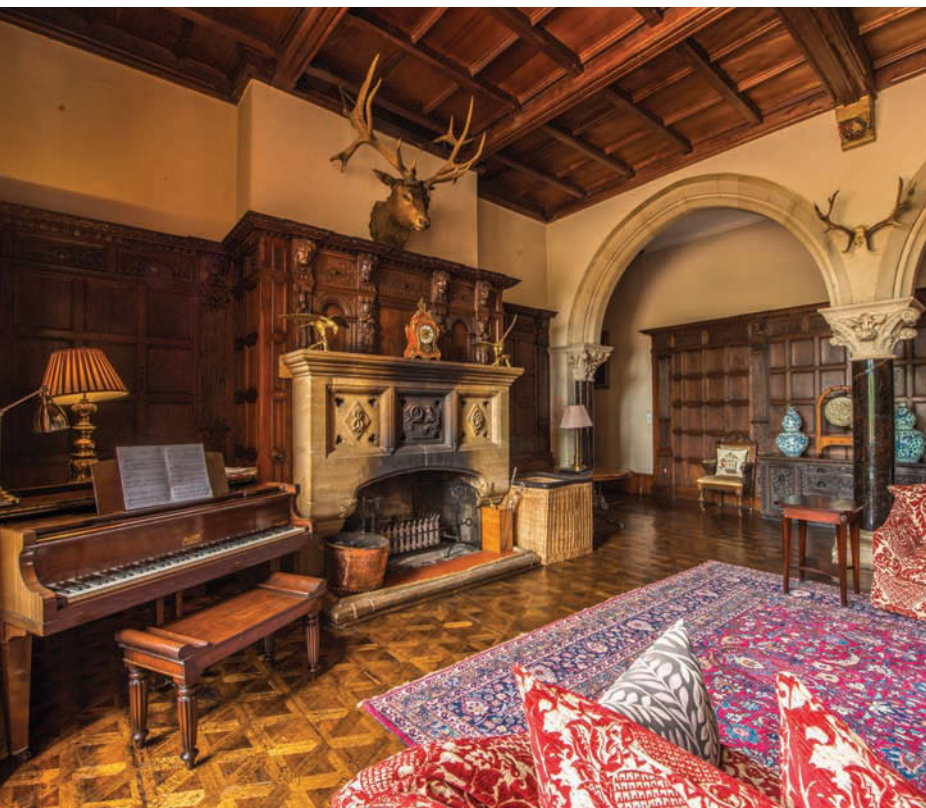
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COUNTRY HOUSE RESCUE

How a Victorian beauty was restored to glory

Words **SUSAN DICKERSON** Photography **HUNTSHAM COURT**



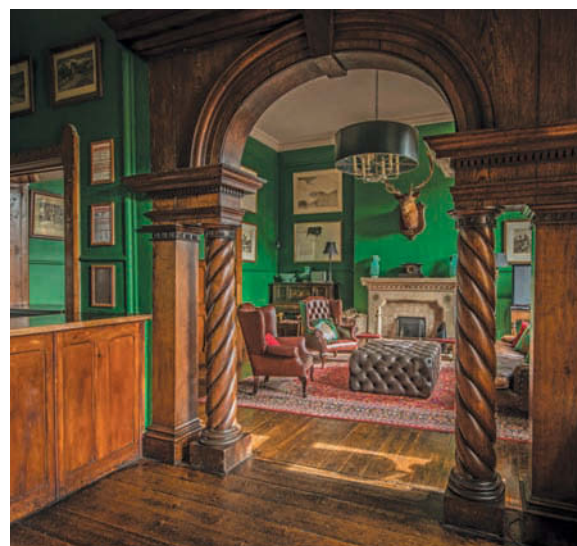
If you've ever wanted to celebrate a milestone in your life with friends and family, this is the place to do it



Above left Damian and husband Chris have rejuvenated a private Victorian mansion which is perfect for parties, weddings, anniversary and birthday celebrations.

We've all dreamed of having a big house in the country. Who wouldn't want to be lady of the manor in a dog-friendly, comfortable space with roaring fires and plenty of room for family and friends? Well, now you can have this experience thanks to Damian Llambias and Christopher Badham, the owners of Huntsham Court, near Exeter, on the Devon/Somerset border. They have restored a beautiful Victorian manor as a private wedding and country house party venue to great acclaim and have a refreshing approach to interiors.

"When we first saw the house in September 2011, it was in quite a state and it was a big leap of faith for us," Damian explains. "Chris is a lawyer and he had been considering taking up a three-year diplomatic post. I have a background in the arts and had been renovating properties in Clapham for the past 15 years. We liked the idea of working for ourselves and were thinking about having a holiday home. This was much bigger; it seemed 'silly big' at first."





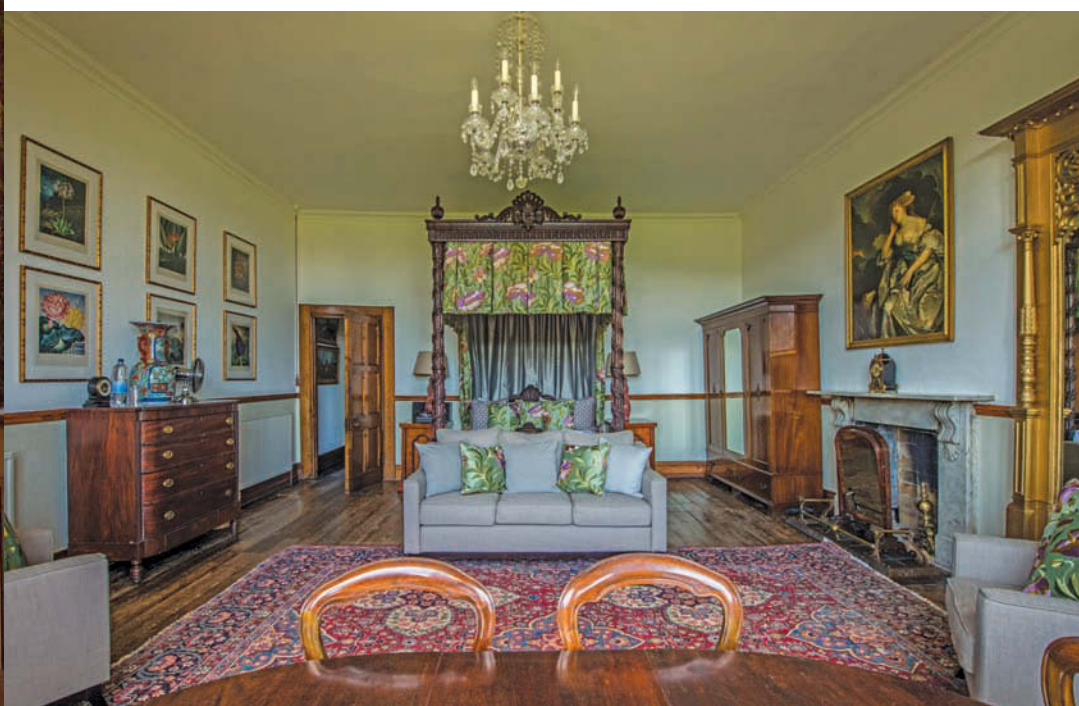
The house was remodelled in 1869 for the Acland Troyte family in the centre of their 5,000 acre estate. The new property was designed by Benjamin Ferry, guided by William Burges (famous for Cardiff Castle and Knightshayes Court), for the marriage of Charles Troyte to Katherine Walrond, as her family didn't think the existing crumbling Tudor property was good enough for her.

EXACTING STANDARDS

Huntsham Court had to be immensely comfortable with mod cons, including central heating, gas lighting and private bathrooms, as well as being grand enough for a baronet's

daughter. But by 1978, Charles and Katherine's descendants sold the house and auctioned its contents. It was run as a foodie country house hotel and also a self-catered rental, before Chris and Damian bought it in January 2012. Famous guests included the writer Douglas Adams, who worked on part of his *Hitchhikers Guide To The Galaxy* trilogy, *So Long And Thanks For All The Fish*, at Huntsham. His tendency to procrastinate was probably not helped by sampling fine wines and socialising with other guests during his stay.

"We had a five-year plan and things have taken off more quickly than we thought," says Damian. "The last two years have been a bit of whirlwind, hoping that we would break



Damian's eye for texture and colour, combined with his expert spatial awareness, ensures luxe comfort without clutter

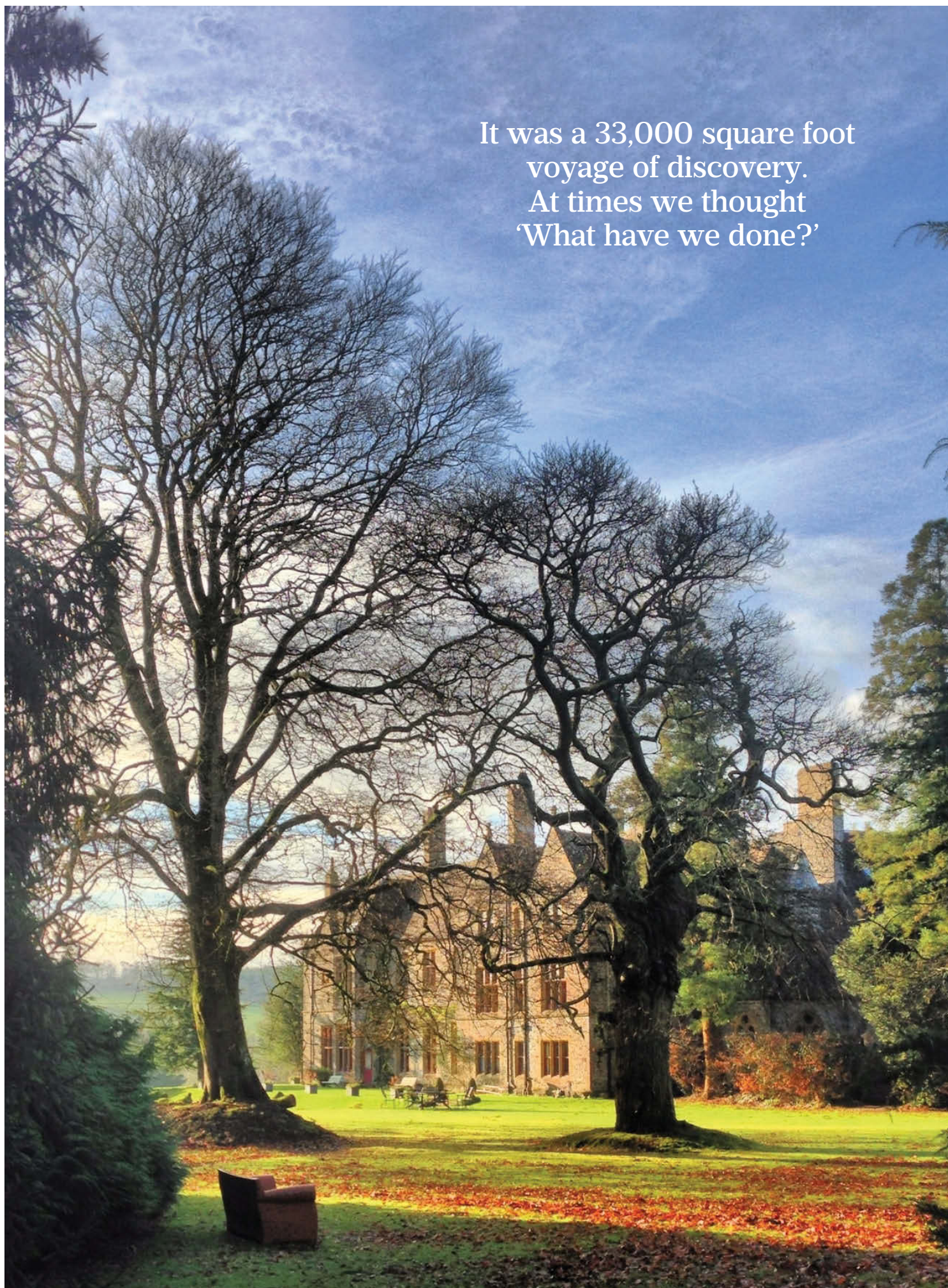
Above The Yellow Room is one of five reception rooms brimming with beautiful period details. The Douglas Bedroom, middle right, is popular with brides and is where the writer Douglas Adams stayed.

even. Chris took one look at the 40ft conifers outside and thought it was Miss Havisham crossed with the Addams family, but we persevered. After the 'strip, stay and upgrade' approach I'd taken with previous properties, this was a whole different ball game. It was a 33,000 square foot voyage of discovery.

"At times we thought 'What have we done?' I think a mixture of passion and desperation got us through. We simply had to make it work. We built the website then 16 couples got in touch and said they wanted to come and stay. They had faith in us and we had six months to get things done in time.



It was a 33,000 square foot
voyage of discovery.
At times we thought
'What have we done?'





Above The library is a bookworm's paradise and can be used as a great venue for lounging on a lazy afternoon. It also works well for special dinners and as a place to play table tennis. Anything goes so you can create the experience you want.

"Every night, I'd be making a mental to-do list and having bite-sized moments of calm. At 2am I'd wonder which thing I needed to fix next. The house had been abandoned for so long and I wanted it to be a home, not a hotel. We felt we had a duty of care to the house and the village, and we wanted to support local businesses too," he explains. "The house moulded us. I didn't want it to be overly dark and heavy. We have 34 bedrooms, (and we can sleep 80 people) so the furniture needs to be robust enough to be used. I love rummaging in auction rooms to find suitable pieces."

Fortunately the roller-coaster years are coming to an end. Chris and Damian now have regular viewings and around 60-80 bookings a year. Their passion for the house and their determination to go the extra mile for their guests is palpable.

"Huntsham is accessible but it feels remote," says Damian. "The location is ideal for Bristol and Exeter, as well as being a short taxi ride from Tiverton Parkway on First Great Western's route to London. But its tucked away between the motorways so it feels a bit like a forgotten treasure. I see the house itself as having a relaxed, granny's house feel or being like a welcoming inn."

OPEN HOUSE

"I say to clients, 'You are renting the house – and there's local back-up'. We give you five hours of an event planner's time, and can advise on local suppliers but it is always your choice, whether you fancy having a formal dinner at £35 per head, or fish and chips or pizza. There are no hidden extras. We have gained a good reputation as a venue for birthdays, weddings and corporate events.

"Our rates are from £9,500 for a two-night stay in low season but mid-week hire and longer stays are possible. Given the price of hotel rooms and catering, guests could make a contribution, and depending on numbers and prices you could cover your costs without breaking the bank. Personally, I think luxury is all about the experience.



Huntsham is in a protective bubble from the world outside, so you can look inside and pack stuff in. We've arranged everything from archery sessions, beauty treatments and supper clubs to off-roading in Land Rovers. It is the special moments which we all remember and I have tried to create spaces which frame these moments. Our five reception rooms are all interchangeable so we can be very flexible."

The whole house oozes relaxed English charm. Damian's eye for texture and colour, combined with his expert spatial awareness ensures maximum comfort without fussy clutter. There are still traces of the original house, with panelling in the great hall, and a magnificent open fire.

The library feels wonderfully traditional thanks to Pugin's original Welby pattern from 1855. Colefax & Fowler's silk damask gold graces the Yellow Room. "I see the house as a Victorian grande dame," says Damian. "I think she approves of what we've done and she's still keeping an eye on us to see what we're up to!" **01398 361 277, huntshamcourt.co.uk**

WESTWARD HO!

First Great Western provides an excellent regional and national service to Tiverton Parkway, which is a 12 minute drive to Huntsham. The express service from Paddington takes two hours and advance single fares from Paddington to Tiverton Parkway cost from £39.50 each way. **0345 7000 1245, firstgreatwestern.co.uk**

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HIT THE BOOKS

Collectables

Margaret Powling swots up on the history of Ladybird books to celebrate their 100th anniversary

By the first week of April, the lambs that were born in February are large enough to enjoy springtime games. The blackthorn is now in blossom, and at this time of the year it is usual to have a cold snap of weather which reminds us that winter is not so far behind as the opening buds would lead us to believe."

Opposite this delightful description of springtime in Britain, taken from *What To Look For in Spring* by E L Grant Watson, is an illustration of lambs gambolling, blossoms swaying in the breeze, and clouds scudding across the sky, indicating that 'cold snap' that countrymen used to call a 'blackthorn winter'. This page of prose and its facing colour illustration perfectly capture the quality of hundreds of books beloved by generations of children, known universally as 'Ladybirds'.

IN POCKET

The very first Ladybird book was produced one hundred years ago, when Loughborough printing firm Wills & Hepworth began to publish 'pure and healthy literature' for children. These early examples were a world apart from the colourful books we now know and love. According to children's books historians Lorraine Johnson and Brian Alderson, early examples had their rudimentary texts further undermined by rather amateurish line drawings, and were printed on very basic, grey wood-pulp paper.

The books steadily grew in popularity and, at the outset of war in September 1939, plans for the expansion of the company were endorsed. Furthermore, superior production methods were adopted. According to Johnson and Alderson, this was quite remarkable. "Surprisingly, given war-time constraints, the front boards of the binding of the first series of the 'new' Ladybirds were quite elaborate:

slightly embossed and furnished with a pasted down repeat of the colour picture on the jacket – a luxury for the times."

The books produced in the 1940s were the first familiar pocket-size Ladybirds, retailing at half a crown. Their affordability meant that a child could buy one with his or her pocket money, or one could be given as a gift by a family member.

From the very beginning, the company was identified by a ladybird logo. At first it was depicted with open wings, but in the late 1950s it was changed to the more familiar closed-wing ladybird. Since then it has undergone several redesigns.

BACK TO NATURE

Until the 1950s the books were published at random, with some 'series' resulting in just a single title. One such example is *The Impatient Horse* by George Murray, which is now a desirable title for collectors. 1953 marked a turning point, as this was the year the first volume in the Nature series was published. *British Birds and their Nests*, according to Johnson and Alderson, "brought Brian Vesey-Fitzgerald, one of the most respected writers on English natural history and the countryside, and Allen W Seaby, who had been Professor of Fine Art at Reading University and was renowned for his illustrations of animals, into the Ladybird family."

These nature novels heralded Ladybird's foray into factual books, such as *Adventures in History*, *People at Work*, and *Achievements*. Revered authors and illustrators who were able to convey knowledge with simplicity and enthusiasm were highly sought after to share their wisdom. *The Kings and Queens of England* series was illustrated by none other than Frank Hampson, perhaps best known for his illustrations in Eagle comic *Dan Dare*,



Pilot of the Future.

Our sons, who learned to read using the widely-adopted Key Words Reading Scheme – but who viewed with some suspicion the exceedingly well-behaved Peter and Jane – had a wonderful little 'scheme' of their own. They would prop their vast collection of Ladybirds on their edges around the perimeter of their bedroom and, like dominoes, set them tumbling. Who says books can't sometimes be toys, too?

Ladybird is now part of Penguin Children's Books alongside Puffin, Frederick Warne and BBC Children's Books. Their *Topsy and Tim* series, written by Jean Adamson, celebrated its 50 year anniversary in 2009 and Ladybird's Key Words with Peter and Jane still remains a favourite with parents and teachers.

Further reading

Ladybird by Design by Lawrence Zeegen
The Ladybird Story by Lorraine Johnson and Brian Alderson
ladybirdflyawayhome.com



Top left
The modern Ladybird logo, which still appears on all new titles printed today

Below right
The "What To Look For..." series is part of Ladybird's original Nature collection

Margaret's Excellent Advice

Our expert shares her tips on starting your own collection of Ladybird books and maintaining it for future generations:

There are a great many second-hand Ladybird books available, and collecting them can be an inexpensive hobby. Most value is attached to clean first editions (including those with dust jackets for editions published until the early 1960s). Unfortunately, the Ladybird imprints seldom make it clear whether or not a book is a first edition.

The National Library of Scotland recommends that you handle and store all books with care, in order to preserve their condition and prevent existing damage from becoming worse. Store your books upright at a 90° angle to the surface. Do not pack the books too tightly or covers may become damaged when you attempt to remove them. Keep books out of direct sunlight, between 16°–19° and away from sources of moisture and condensation, such as windows and pipes.

DIARY DATES

● Antiques For Everyone Spring Fair, Birmingham NEC, 9th–12th April

The UK's largest antiques, interiors and collectables fair features more than 250 art and antiques dealers, giving visitors to the popular show a wealth of choice. There will be a vast array of treasures on offer, from British and decorative furniture to vintage clothes and much more. Each item has been vetted by a leading team for quality, date and condition, allowing you to spend with confidence. Tickets are £15 on the door (£12 in advance), open from 11am–6pm Thursday–Saturday and 11am–5pm on Sunday. 0844 581 0827, antiquesforeveryone.co.uk

● Bloomsbury Book Fair, Royal National Hotel, London, 12th April

Taking place on the second Sunday of every month, this event welcomes over 100 dealers, who specialise in antiquarian, second-hand and out of print books, as well as experts in ephemera and print and maps. Entry is £2 until 12.30pm, after which time it is free. Open from 10am–4pm. Parking is free on Sundays, and Russell Square tube station is just a two minute walk away. 01707 872 140, bloomsburybookfair.com

● Oxford Book Fair, Oxford Brookes University, 25th–26th April

This fantastic fair features over 100 dealers, offering tons of rare, collectable and second-hand books. The event frequently attracts the attention of the press thanks to the notable pieces that have come to light, such as an archive of the First World War aviator who coined the word 'joystick'. Held at the Oxford Brookes campus, there are good transport links available, as well as a recently refurbished on-site café. Tickets are £2, open from 12pm–6pm on Saturday and 10am–4pm on Sunday. 07921 151 496, pbfa.org

● Ladybird by Design, De La Warr Pavilion, 24th January–10th May

Enjoy an exhibition of over 200 original illustrations to celebrate 100 years of Ladybird at the De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill-on-Sea. The drawings come from a selection of Ladybird books from the late 1950s to the early 1970s, revealing our changing society. The exhibition is named after the newly published book, *Ladybird by Design*, written by Professor of Illustration and Dean of the School of Design at the London College of Communications, Lawrence Zeegen. Entry is free, donations are welcome. Open Monday–Friday 10am–5pm. 01424 229 111, dlwp.com





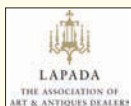
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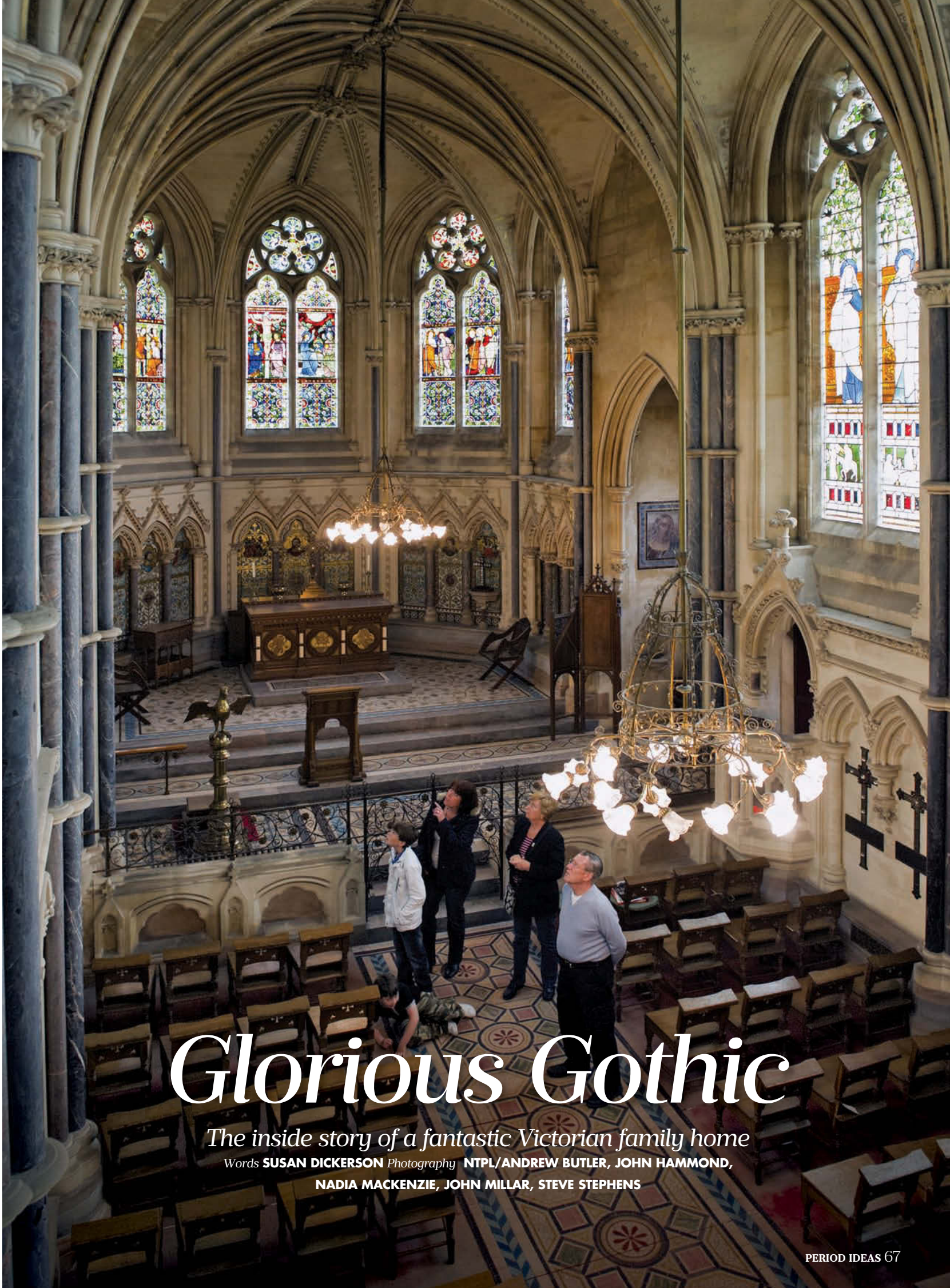
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Glorious Gothic

The inside story of a fantastic Victorian family home

Words **SUSAN DICKERSON** Photography **NTPL/ANDREW BUTLER, JOHN HAMMOND,**
NADIA MACKENZIE, JOHN MILLAR, STEVE STEPHENS



Above Matilda Blanche Gibbs, William's wife, with some of their seven children. They were married in 1839, when William was aged 49 and Blanche, a baronet's daughter from Gloucestershire, was aged 21.

The saying 'Where there's muck there's brass,' could have been coined for William Gibbs, one of Victorian England's wealthiest commoners. He made a fortune from the guano trade (the sale of bird droppings for use as fertiliser) in South America and had the enviable knack of knowing when to diversify his portfolio. His family business had interests in cloth, guano, wine and fruit, and then moved into banking and shipping.

There's no doubt that William was a grafter. He retired at 68 and spent much of his career clearing debts after his father and older brother went bankrupt following some mistakes in the Spanish cloth trade. His splendid home, Tyntesfield, near Bristol, reflected his status and his Anglo-Catholic faith. He bought a Georgian manor on the site in 1843, at the age of 53,

The architect John Norton was strongly influenced by Augustus Pugin and John Ruskin and the house is regarded as his masterpiece

and spent the next 30 years redeveloping it. William also bought more land for forestry and dairy production and at its peak, the estate employed 500 people. It stayed in his family until 2001 and was bought by the National Trust the following year, after a massive campaign to raise £35million.

The Trust had earmarked the property back in the 1970s, thanks to the architect Mark Giroaud's assessment. "There is no other Victorian country house which so richly represents its age as Tyntesfield," he wrote. Jon Drucker, visitor services manager, explains, "The house itself is Victorian Gothic and built of Bath stone. William could afford to get the best and he needed a base close to the port of Bristol for his business. He was a man of faith – and was inspired by the great cathedrals of Europe as well as fashion. Tyntesfield was a retreat from London whilst being convenient to Bristol."

FAMILY TREE

Today, Tyntesfield tells the story of William and his descendants. "The men and women who lived in the house with their families were from four different generations, so visitors can see the objects which were loved and used by them all," says Jon. "The house itself is very accessible. As well as the public rooms, you can see more personal spaces such as the beds the family slept in and their bathrooms. A lot of seating has been worn by people sitting on it and we try to present the rooms as they would have been used. For example, Richard, the last owner of the house before it passed to the Trust, had a porcelain pig which he used to keep his cornflakes in. Some people get really concerned about whether the pig is out or in the right place."

There are few better places to get a feel for the Victorian Gothic, than Tyntesfield. Its architect, John Norton, was strongly influenced by Augustus Pugin and John Ruskin's work and the house is regarded as his masterpiece. The





Living LEGACY

Tyntesfield has a wealth of events for you to enjoy from meeting Queen Victoria's soldiers to learning more about Antony's legacy at the house from March –August this year. Some events need to be booked in advance. For more details call **0344 800 4966** or go to nationaltrust.org.uk



pointed arch, representing Christian striving towards heaven and the resurrection, was at the heart of the Gothic revival, in contrast to elements of Classical architecture which were often based on pagan temples.

Tyntesfield's exterior delights the eye with pinnacles, gables, crenellated towers, stained glass and leaded light windows giving the impression that the house is much older than it actually is. Inside, visitors can admire glorious rooms inspired by medieval designs and see how elements of the family's history are incorporated into the schemes. For example, William was born in Madrid and spent his early boyhood there so there are Spanish motifs in the house. The final piece of his reworking of the house was the chapel which is Jon Drucker's favourite part of Tyntesfield.



ACT OF FAITH

"This is the most richly decorated room in the house for me," he says. "It is William's deep faith made visible. His most private and personal belief is made real in the rich mosaics on the floor and the soaring windows. He intended to be buried in a crypt there. But the chapel was never consecrated as the local rector and his patrons at Wraxall were concerned that it might effect their congregation and took the matter to the Bishop of Bath. Despite the controversy, when William died in 1875, he was buried in the churchyard at Wraxall, with his coffin carried in relays by 30 men from the estate."

No other Victorian country house so richly represents its age as Tyntesfield



Jon says, "I'm really interested in the transition between the hey day of the Victorian era into the Edwardian era, at the turn of the 20th century. When we look at the second generation of the Gibbs family, we can see how it is almost transiting into the modern. Antony (William's eldest son) was not part of the importing family business – that went to his cousin – and he needed to adapt as he had 10 children to support. I think there is a strong element of continuity in the family. The men had a sense of duty. They were educated at good schools and spent time in the armed services. Antony and his heir, George, who was raised to the peerage as Baron Wraxall, were philanthropic."

Although the men headed the family, there were some very strong women at Tyntesfield. The largest portraits in the house are of the women and George's second wife, Lady Wraxall, faced the challenge of caring for the house during the Second World War and into the 1970s. As a widow with two young children, a large estate and a small income, she had to be very practical when repairs were needed. When the clock tower, the focal point of the house, needed major repairs in 1935 due to dry rot, she had it taken down, stored the metal parts for future use and realigned the roof, as if the tower had never existed.

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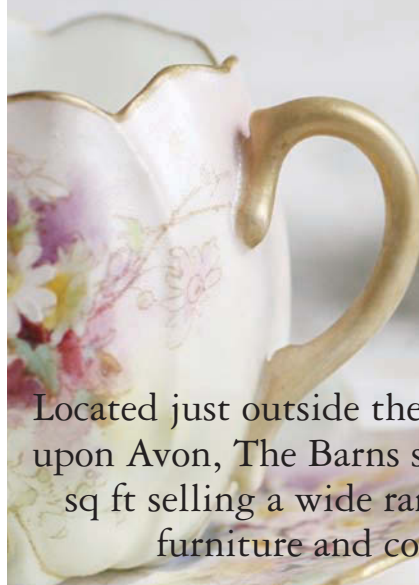
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STONEMASON

DRESS to IMPRESS

Seoana Sherry-Brennan visits Chilstone to discover how its bespoke restoration service can help to transform the exterior of your period property



Period houses have always been a great investment, and research conducted during the past decade has shown that this continues to be true - with older properties benefiting from much larger value increases than their newly-built counterparts. Money aside though, while new properties may have the latest energy-saving solar roof panels or luxurious underfloor heating, period homes are crammed full of charming original features. Not only do these elements make them stand out from run-of-the-mill modern builds, they also



help to keep alive Britain's architectural heritage, and remind us of the exceptional levels of craftsmanship that this country is lucky enough to have.

SET IN STONE

Sadly, original features often find themselves the victims of wear and tear. External stonework in particular has to contend with the unpredictability and brutal force of British weather, which often leaves it damaged and unsightly. Thankfully, there are companies



dedicated to restoring and replicating original stonework, allowing you to bring your home and garden back to its former glory.

Chilstone has been creating columns, architraves, sphinxes, lions, gargoyles and other architectural delights from its own composite stone for 60 years, which it makes by hand in its Langton Green workshop. The company, which is based in Tunbridge Wells, has restored lost architectural gems all over the country for Royal Palaces, abbeys, World Heritage sites and for many period homes.

Composite stone has been used in prestigious building projects for centuries, and has many benefits over carved stone. It is homogeneous throughout, which prevents flaking, and can be formed with reinforcing steel components, making it super-strong and durable. It is also much less expensive than carved alternatives. Another perk of composite stone is its ability to be matched in colour and texture to almost any existing stonework. Its composition encourages the spontaneous growth of mosses and lichens, which rapidly



Chilstone is a specialist in restoring damaged stonework and can repair virtually any classic architectural feature

give it the antiqued appearance of an original.

Chilstone is a specialist in restoring damaged stonework such as crests, urns and columns, and can repair virtually any classic architectural feature. Its small but dedicated team will help to work out the fine details and costings of projects, and will produce in-depth CAD drawings so that homeowners can see how the finished design will look in situ.

with bay trees is a simple but effective way to brighten up the place. In recent years the art of topiary has gone through a revival, and planting sculpted forms in urns and jardinières is both beautiful and practical, as the plants can be moved around when necessary.

THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Chilstone firmly believes that a home's exterior is just as crucial as the décor inside. First impressions are everything, and property is one instance when judging a book by its cover often turns out to give an accurate depiction of the story inside. It's pointless spending thousands on a new bathroom or kitchen and neglecting the exterior, as this is what people will first see of your home, and a bad initial impression is difficult to change.

Sprucing up your property's exterior can add as much as 2-3% to the value of your home. Spending some time taking care of the basic elements of your property will ensure that you entice viewers in, should you be looking to move.

Another cost-effective idea for improving the outside appearance of your property is with a self-contained fountain. These come in many sizes and can often use a closed circuit system to conserve water, if running costs are a worry. Or, if you want to add some greenery to your entrance, a pair of heavy planters complete



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lauraashley.com

3 Bunny egg cup, £4.50, The Contemporary
Home. 0845 130 8229,
tch.net

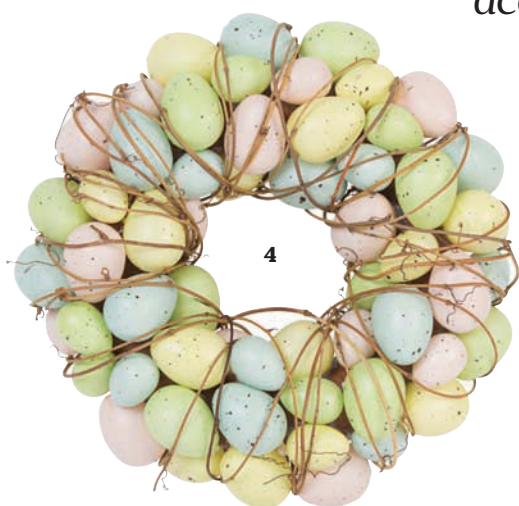
4 Pastel Easter egg and twig wreath, £21,
The Contemporary Home. 0845 130 8229,
tch.net

5 Pastel wooden Easter eggs, £3.99 for four,
Retreat-Home. 0870 8033 428,
retreat-home.com

6 Playful rabbits cushion cover,
£15, Home Candy. 0800 298 4150,
homecandy.com

7 Hen Easter egg holders, £2.99 each,
Drift Living. 01289 330 480,
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8 Chicken tin jug, £18,
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THE HOT SEAT

Relax in comfort and style with our top tips for picking the perfect sofa

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According to research by the John Lewis Soft Furnishings department, we spend an average of three hours and 42 minutes on the sofa every day. Going by these figures, that means we are parked on the settee for approximately 1,250 hours a year. It is therefore crucial that our seating is providing the best experience possible, in terms of comfort and style. We've gathered the best industry advice and collated our lounging know-how to provide you with the knowledge you need to invest in the ideal sofa for you and your family.

GAME PLAN

Before you get flustered over fabric swatches, you need to have an idea of your living room's dimensions. Measure the room and then decide how much of the space you want to be filled by your new purchase. Is the sofa going to be the only seating option, or will there be other pieces? If you plan to pick up a few extra armchairs, an L-shape will work best, as it will slot snugly against a wall and allow you to arrange other items around it. Small living areas will need a couch that is multifunctional – providing as much seating as possible and also having a strong design that complements the existing room scheme.

One question you should ask yourself, which may seem obvious but is crucial to consider, is how many people you

need to seat in your living space. A standard large sofa will usually fit three adults or a family of four comfortably. Take into account the arms of the sofa when you're measuring up too, as forgetting these can lead to disaster when you're trying to fit all of your furniture into place.

It's worth drawing up a rough plan of how the entire room will be laid out, including which way the sofa will be orientated. If you like to snuggle up in front of the TV then face the sofa this way, or if you prefer to socialise with friends over a glass of wine, arrange seating around a coffee table.

INSIDE TRACK

Next, it's time to get back to basics and take a look underneath the covers of your prospective sofa. The construction of your new seating will determine its lifespan. The key to a settee that stands the test of time is a sturdy frame. Choosing a cheaper option made using a soft wood, such as pine, may save you money, but it is more likely to buckle or show signs of wear. Splash the cash on a hardwood frame, which will last for far longer. Ensure that any joints on your furniture are solidly connected, by either dowels or metal screws and brackets – staples or glue alone will not suffice.

Just like a mattress, part of your sofa consists of a series of springs. Once again, lower-priced options will be made

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with less expensive metals that will sag over time, so don't go for the cheapest choice. In terms of fillings, it all depends on what you want out of your sofa. Foam comes in two options – low-density and high-resilience. Low-density is less expensive and easy to look after, but constant use can make it disintegrate, whereas the resilient option is more pricey but will survive for longer. Feather-stuffed cushions provide a luxurious finish, but will require constant plumping and can aggravate allergies.

MATERIAL WORLD

Now that you've sorted the inside, you can start to consider the outside of your sofa. Pick a piece that you like and which you can see fitting effortlessly into your room. In terms of fabric choice, cotton and linen are our go-to materials, as they are durable and can be treated for stain resistance. Other options include wool and silk, but these require more specific care and treatment.

Leather is another fabric which is a popular choice for sofas, especially as it has become more affordable in recent years. You can go contemporary with plain styles, or create

a traditional feel with studded arms and button backs. Leather upholstery deals well with wear and tear, so is ideal if your sofa is going to receive a lot of use.

Classic styles and neutral colours will always be in vogue, but that's not to say you can't make a statement with your sofa. Current trends in seating dictate that blue is big news, particularly when paired with Pantone's colour of the year – marsala. We're also a fan of classic grey, which you can easily enhance with coloured cushions and throws.

Mid-century designs have also made a comeback this season, with the sleek, minimal styles of the 60s and 70s having a resurgence. This type of sofa will have cornered edges and straight arms, and will be devoid of trimmings or other decorative features. Colour is the most important factor – go for something bright to make a statement in your living area.

In terms of prints, global-inspired patterns are very in right now, as are bold, floral motifs. A piece like this can transform a space, and will provide your home with a new place to relax and a brand new focal feature – multitasking at its best!



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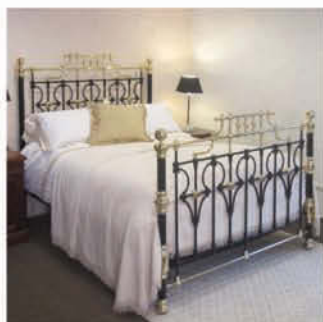
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QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

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I'm a big fan of Edwardian décor, but I can't find a bed to match my classical bedroom scheme. Can you help?

Yes! Our Bronte bed, shown here in a chic nickel finish, is based upon a late Edwardian design. The simple and traditional style will never date, which means that no matter how often you change your interior scheme, the Bronte can always remain a part of it. The bright and warm design goes fantastically with a range of colours and looks, and also comes in brass, ivory, cream or black. All of our beds are handmade and finished in Norfolk, and are available as a single (3ft or 4ft), double, king and super-king.

Harry Thompson, Wrought Iron & Brass Bed Co.
01485 542 516, wroughtironandbrassbed.co.uk



Style statement

I want my bed to be the focal point of my bedroom, how can I guarantee it won't blend into the background?

Our Hampton Half Tester canopy bed is handcrafted from solid mindi wood with burr walnut veneers. Intricate carving features on the headboard and footboard, which instantly evokes an air of elegance. Plus, to add to the feeling of grandeur, the bed has a stunning canopy, which has been upholstered in luxurious cream silk. You can rest assured that your gorgeous bed will arrive in excellent condition, as we use a specialist furniture courier to deliver all of our pieces directly from our warehouse to your door.

Ruth Whittaker, Lock Stock & Barrel Furniture
01531 633 333, lockstockandbarrel-uk.com



Bold as brass ▼

I would like a traditional Victorian bed but I don't want the hassle of cleaning the brass all the time. Is there an alternative?

Spending all your free time cleaning and polishing is definitely something to avoid. Why not try nickel plating, whereby the brass is coated with nickel to protect it and create a more contemporary finish? Beds tend to look stunning in black or grey with nickel and it gives a modern twist to the traditional Victorian design. Once in a while simply remove marks with a window cleaning product - the effort required is minimal, so you can spend your time relaxing in your luxurious bed, rather than cleaning it!

Tony Butler, Divine Dreams
01691 777 622, divinedreams.co.uk



Best foot forward ▲

I recently moved home and the master bedroom is very large. I would like some extra accessories to fill it, what do you recommend?

A footstool is a great option, as it can serve a number of purposes. It can be used for its primary function - to put your feet up at the end of a long day - or as a side table or extra seating. Our footstools are handmade and come in two standard sizes, 40cm x 60cm and 32cm². Or, if you're after something to fit a specific space, we can build a bespoke piece to suit your needs. We can also provide matching cushions to complete your scheme, and we have a range of stylish fabric options available, including this cheery Florence design.

Tracey Bigrigg, Flossy's Footstools
07980 654 741, flossysfootstools.co.uk



Custom creations ▲

We have just bought a wonderful antique bed, but it's too short for us! Can it be altered to fit our specifications?

It can indeed. Whether the piece needs a full restoration or it would just benefit from some sympathetic renovation, we can help you to make use of your antique purchase. All beds can be lengthened and most can be widened too, and it is also possible to recreate missing pieces. We have our own foundry for casting metal and brass parts, as well as our own wood, metal and polishing finishing workshops, so we can restore pretty much any bed back to its former glory and make it suitable for you and your home.

Nikki Ashton, Bedsteads of Bath & Bristol
01275 464 114, bedsteads-uk.co.uk

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Moody blues

The Matki ONE collection offers a choice of coloured frames and disc details which can be matched to suit the colours in the bathroom. The new Curved Corner enclosure image is shown with Silver frames and Blue disc details. Available in sizes: 900mm to 1500mm priced from £1,440, **01454 322 888**, matki.co.uk



HOTEL CHIC

An Embrace curved wetroom panel makes a superb addition to a classic bathroom. It has been developed from Roman's designs for the hotel sector, and it offers effortless entry to all members of the household. Expect to pay from around £450. **01325 311 318**, roman-showers.com

APRIL showers

We couldn't resist a quick round-up of the latest showers on the market this spring

SUITE DREAMS

Create the ultimate shower room with twin wall-hung vanities and a generous showering space. The combination of shower elements shown, is priced from £1,598 at Crosswater. **01322 475 800**, crosswater.co.uk



GOLD RUSH

Be ahead of the fashion pack with this stunning Series 8 designer enclosure from Merlyn. For a touch of Vegas style you can even have matching taps. Expect to pay from around £1,495.20. **00353 56 779 1555**, merlynshowering.com



Smooth operator

Blend traditional good looks with the best in modern innovation without breaking the bank! The SVSET50 Henley dual function exposed shower system, pictured above, is priced from £550 at Roper Rhodes. **01225 303 900**, roperrhodes.co.uk



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Above: Keep your toiletries tidy with the help of beautiful his and her's basins. Chadder's classic style is a superb way to bring a touch of Downton Abbey chic to your home. Price on application at Chadder.

01342 823 243, chadder.com

Right: Bring bathroom storage up to date with a snazzy aluminium mirrored cabinet from Croydex, priced £179.98. It has two adjustable toughened clear glass shelves for all your lotions and potions, and is supplied fully assembled.

01264 365 881, croydex.co.uk



Wash & Go

Susan Dickerson explains how to turn your bathroom into a place of sanctuary

Creating a feel-good bathroom is much easier than some experts would have us believe. The trick is to invest in a classic suite, or replace the components of your current bathroom one piece at a time from a reputable supplier, if you're on a tight budget.

There is no substitute for buying from a dedicated bathroom company where the staff are passionate about what they do and are happy to explain the intricacies of everything from washers to water saving devices. It also pays to establish how easy it will be able to get replacement parts before you part with any cash. Given a lot of bathroom production has shifted to the Middle East and the Far East, with high-end designs being ripped off and reproduced very quickly, remember all that glitters is not gold.

There's a reason why you will see brands such as Hansgrohe, Grohe, Kaldewei and Duravit in leading hotels worldwide. Become a

brassware detective when you are out and about, and notice who is providing the sanitaryware in busy eateries and posh department stores. Clearly, your home won't have quite so much traffic, but it will give you an idea of how durable the best bathroom products are.

SOFTEN UP

It is true that the avocado bathroom still casts a long shadow over colour in the British bathroom, and the downside of an all-white bathroom is that there is no escape from noticing dust and dirt. There is also the danger of the whole room feeling a little too clinical. Using natural materials in the bathroom, especially stone and wood can help to soften pale colours, or you can work with pink to warm up this special space.



Above: Choose the right tiles for a feminine retreat. Laura Ashley Artisan in Amethyst (7.5x15cm and 7.5x30cm) and Creamware (7.5x30cm) with whitewash wood effect on the floor (15x50cm). Price £70/sqm for the wall tiles, £33/sqm for the floor tiles, at British Ceramic Tile.

01626 831391, Britishceramictile.com



Add a splash of colour to the bathroom with a BC Designs painted acrylic boat bath, available in three sizes. It can be painted to order in any eggshell finish paint colour and is priced from £1,554. Shown here in Cinder Rose.

01206 827 100, bcdesigns.co.uk

MID-CENTURY *makeover*

Enliven your interiors with the bright hues and bold prints of fabulous Fifties inspired homeware



Left Leo sofa, from £850; statue, £140; Mumo cushion, £45; table-top light, £390, all at Do South. **020 8771 0500, dosouthshop.co.uk**

Right The Artisan furniture collection at Premier Housewares. **0141 579 2000, premierhousewares.co.uk**

Below Lavaliers wallpaper in Atomic Red, £57 per roll; Atomic Red, White Lead, Mister David & Pale Lime Intelligent Eggshell paint, £53 for 2.5l, all at Little Greene. **020 7935 8844, littlegreene.com**



A combination of pared-back shapes, natural materials and bold patterns make up this striking trend

We may be constantly striving to bring our homes up-to-date with the latest technology, but we continue to look to the past for decorating inspiration. Replicating classic styles from previous eras is a great way to update your interiors, without risking the appearance of your abode. Opting for a look that has stood the test of time is a sensible choice, especially if you're on a restricted budget that won't allow for multiple makeovers.

Mid-century modern is a term which refers to architectural, interior and graphic design around 1935-1965. During this time, a simple, fresh aesthetic evolved as a reaction against tired, traditional designs, reflecting the desire to embrace the modern era. The style has recently been in the limelight thanks to the television

series *Man Men* which has introduced the look to a new generation.

Art Deco style was still influential, but due to the Wall Street crash and the subsequent Great Depression, it was used in a less flamboyant way. Mass production became more popular, providing a cheaper alternative to expensive, custom-made pieces. Eclecticism flourished, as home-owners who couldn't afford to buy new furniture mixed existing pieces from different eras. As the 1950s arrived, there was a sense of optimism that was reflected in the home, as the austerity of the post-war period eased. Abstract patterns and bright colours dominated, with kooky prints on fabrics and ceramics bringing a sense of joy into interiors.

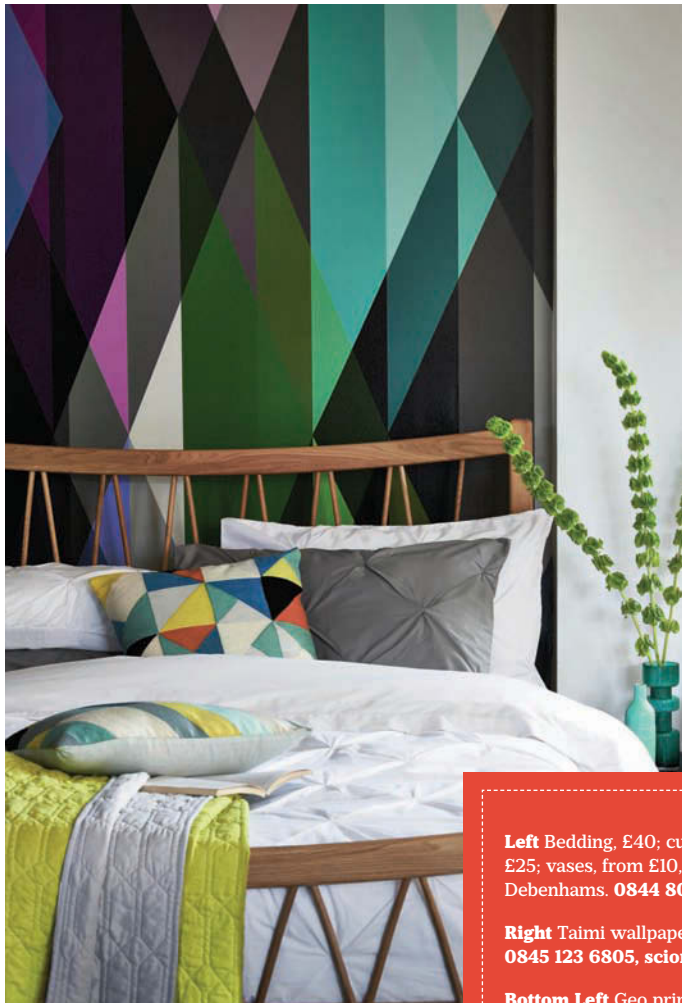
A combination of pared-back shapes, natural materials and bold patterns make up

this striking trend, which offers a balance between organic and man-made design elements. Pale woods are contrasted with primary hues and zesty shades, for statement furniture which forms the focal point of your new scheme, while geometric prints, such as chevrons, stripes and checks, inject a sense of fun and movement.

To bring the look into your home, start with the basics. Furniture should be wooden, preferably pale, though the occasional teak or walnut piece would also work. Lighting is a key element, it should be considered as more than just a necessity and instead used as a decorative feature in your space. Zany wallpapers aside, walls need to be white, to allow the bold prints and patterns of your furnishings to take centre stage.



Julianne loveseat in pebble felt effect, £399; Miami occasional table in sulphur yellow, £29; Pasadena red ceramic table lamp, £29; Thorpness metal electric pendant in sulphur yellow, £29; blue triangle rug, £90; cushions, from £8; white frames, £8 each, all at Tesco Direct.
0800 323 4050,
tesco.com/direct



Left Bedding, £40; cushions, from £25; throw, £25; vases, from £10, all Ben De Lisi at Debenhams. 0844 800 8877, debenhams.com

Right Taimi wallpaper, £38 per roll. Scion. 0845 123 6805, scion.uk.com



Bottom Left Geo print curtains, £25; crewel work cushions, £18; linen look cushion, £14; geo knit cushion, £35, all at Next. 0333 777 8000, next.co.uk

Bottom Right Cushion in Redig beige; curtains in Moira aqua; blind in Clark ochre; cushions in Ruta aqua and Ranka aqua, all from the Signature fabric collection by Lotta Jansdotter. For stockist details call 01707 635 201 or visit ashleywildegroupp.com



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find the best appliance to suit your lifestyle."

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"We typically cover the counties of Cheshire, Lancashire, North Wales, and Staffordshire but please get in touch on 01565 830 885 and we shall try to accommodate you wherever possible," says Katie.

It is worth knowing that if you have an Aga range cooker to sell (perhaps if you are clearing a house or moving house), Avec buy old models and offer the best cash prices in the UK, with rapid collection service.

If your own trusty Aga cooker needs to be rejuvenated after many years of good and faithful service, it can definitely enjoy a new lease of life. Katie and the team can help, so do give them a ring and get some advice today.

removable parts are discarded and replaced with new ones, the oven castings are shot-blasted and the vitreous enamelled parts are re-enamelled by a specialist. Every cooker looks brand-new when it leaves us and we offer a 5 year parts and labour guarantee.

"You can also rest assured that in your purchase of a reconditioned Aga cooker from Avec Cookers you are making a wise choice in all our attempts to protect the environment. By re-using the existing cast iron components and minimising and recycling the waste produced, a reconditioned cooker is a green choice for those wishing to reduce their carbon footprint."

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When it comes to creating a fabulous kitchen, a hard-working cooker is a vital component. If you want to have a reconditioned cooker which looks and works just like new, without the hefty price tag, the team at Avec Cookers are happy to help.

With over 250 cookers in stock, you're sure to find a great new kitchen helper with expert advice from this well-established family business. Katie Pimblott explains, "We don't simply clean up and repair second-hand cookers. Every appliance is completely overhauled. In a nutshell, this means that the

Get in TOUCH

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The simply-styled Milbourne range kitchen in Stone, is priced from £8,000, Second Nature. 01325 505 539, sncollection.co.uk

Contemporary classic

Susan Dickerson spills the beans on modern country kitchens

There will always be a place for the country kitchen in the lexicon of British interior design. There is something inherently pleasing in the shapes and colours of natural materials and nothing like rustic style to evoke instant comfort. Times have changed since the family sat around the fireside in the farmhouse kitchen, warming up before and after they worked the land, so the modern country kitchen is always pushing the boundaries with new design possibilities.

I believe that people are attracted by both familiarity and novelty (the remarkable brand extension of our favourite chocolate bars is a case in point), so kitchen designers like to delight us with hidden technology behind a traditional facade. American fridge-freezers, always popular with large families, can be tucked away behind cabinetry and islands are often home to second sinks and state of the art dishwashers.

The new country kitchen is one which combines modern efficiency with old world charm. This is a look which can encompass salvaged and second-hand pieces as well as stainless steel and concrete worktops.

You can choose striking rather than twee to create a space which is energising to be in and inspires you to experiment with your cooking. After all the kitchen should be the most creative and nurturing place in the house, as we return to it constantly throughout the day (and night, if midnight feasts are the norm in your house).

HOMELY HAVEN

"A country-style kitchen can provide a wonderful sense of comfort for you and family," says Dan Clayton, of Olive Branch Kitchens (01937 582 797, olive-branch.biz). "I think a kitchen works hard to be a haven as well as a workstation so make sure you consider having a proper old-

HOT STUFF

Eco-friendly living is a big part of the modern rustic trend, so look no further than West Country Cookers to purchase a fabulous reconditioned range cooker of your very own. 01548 830 069, westcountrycookers.co.uk



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fashioned kitchen table and possibly an island unit if you have the space. We make all our kitchen furniture by hand from solid pine in our Wetherby workshop, there are no 'standard sizes' so the design is really up to you. You can choose how big your drawers and cupboards are and even how many shelves you would like inside."

Be honest about which materials appeal to you and feel good for you to touch. Timber insets for drawers are charming and open shelving can be a lovely and simple way to display your favourite pots and pans. The modern country style is ideal for homeowners who want to go back to basics and like a simple and streamlined approach to their kitchens, where guests can pitch in with the cooking, if needs be. Be generous when it comes to choosing a kitchen sink, to make sure you will be able to soak your biggest roasting tray with ease.

2 The Victoria TR4110R0 traditional dual fuel, four cavity range cooker with a gas hob from Smeg puts this kitchen in the pink. **0844 557 9907** smeguk.com

3 Explore a beautiful selection of tiles in vintage hues and country colours at Marlborough Tiles. Make it your first stop for gorgeous walls and floors. **01672 512 422** marlboroughtiles.com

4 Glorious wood panelling and understated cabinets set the tone in this Timeless scheme, priced from £15,000 at Funktional Kitchens. **020 8341 2020**, funktionalkitchens.co.uk

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One foot in the PAST

Susan Dickerson meets the ancestors who shaped our modern world

British people are fascinating. As we debate the NHS, or worry about the impact of technology on our grandchildren, we're on the edge, fearing the worst and trying to preserve what we think of as 'our' way of life. As we approach a pivotal election, different aspects of Britishness come to the fore: the radical tradition, as the Green Party is finally taken seriously, an embattled Conservative establishment, and the perennial question of how to best help the disadvantaged.

We pick and choose our past with care; enjoying historical dramas about the Tudors and but shunning the complexities of the Civil War. Our focus is inward, on our homes and finances and we are often anxious about our social standing. Our Victorian forebears would understand many of our fears and concerns, although they would be mortified by declining church attendance, astonished by the internet and perhaps amazed that so many buildings they knew and loved are still standing, surrounded by parked cars.

PAINTING THE LILY

It is easy to glance at Victorian interior design and architecture, and call it stuffy or derivative. High Victorian style can feel cluttered and overly ornate. But I think our forebears painted the lily simply because they could. The rate of technological advance and the range of global influences to draw upon was mind-blowing. Conspicuous consumption for the masses, a desire to project a certain image through one's décor, along with shopping as a leisure activity and concerns about ageing all gained momentum in the late 19th century and these themes still shape our lives.

We are still reacting to the Victorian era today. It was a great age of invention from Brunel's bridges and ships, to Nightingale's establishment of the first secular nursing school

in the world, and Bazalgette's creation of London's modern sewers. We still live within Victorian structures, from education, to transport and government and perhaps lack the energy, civic mindedness and foresight to improve them.

Taxidermy has become fashionable again even if the telegram and penny post coexist alongside email and social media. If we get past the caricatures of ladies in poke bonnets and gentlemen with side whiskers, we can see true trailblazers in the first sepia photos, looking forwards with courage and curiosity. We need to take courage, and do the same. Or at least, pay a visit to the Victoria and Albert museum (above), in memory of the Prince Consort, and one of the best kings the UK never had, pictured below with his wife!

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Grand ENTRANCE

We delve into the history of floors and windows and share expert advice for maintaining and restoring them

Like it or not, we are creatures of habit. Many of our actions are so ingrained into our subconscious we seldom think about them, they just take place naturally. Opening the front door is a typical example: the key goes in the lock, you give it a twist and step over the threshold. What lies beyond the door is always our focus – whether it be a relaxing bath after a long day or a welcoming hug from a dear friend.

DOORS TO ADORE

This hasn't always been the case though. During the Victorian era, the front door was of utmost importance, denoting the wealth and status of the home-owner. It was therefore crucial that it conveyed the correct message to anyone who approached. The solid, wood-panelled doors of the Georgian period, which featured a semi-circular fanlight above to let in light, were replaced by a variety of designs. Victorian designers were very much inspired by the past, and therefore incorporated elements from a range of eras. Panelling and elaborate carvings were very common, and these features were often enhanced by a statement door frame – ranging from classical pillars to Gothic pointed arches. At this time glass was introduced to doors, and many were decorated with beautiful stained panes.



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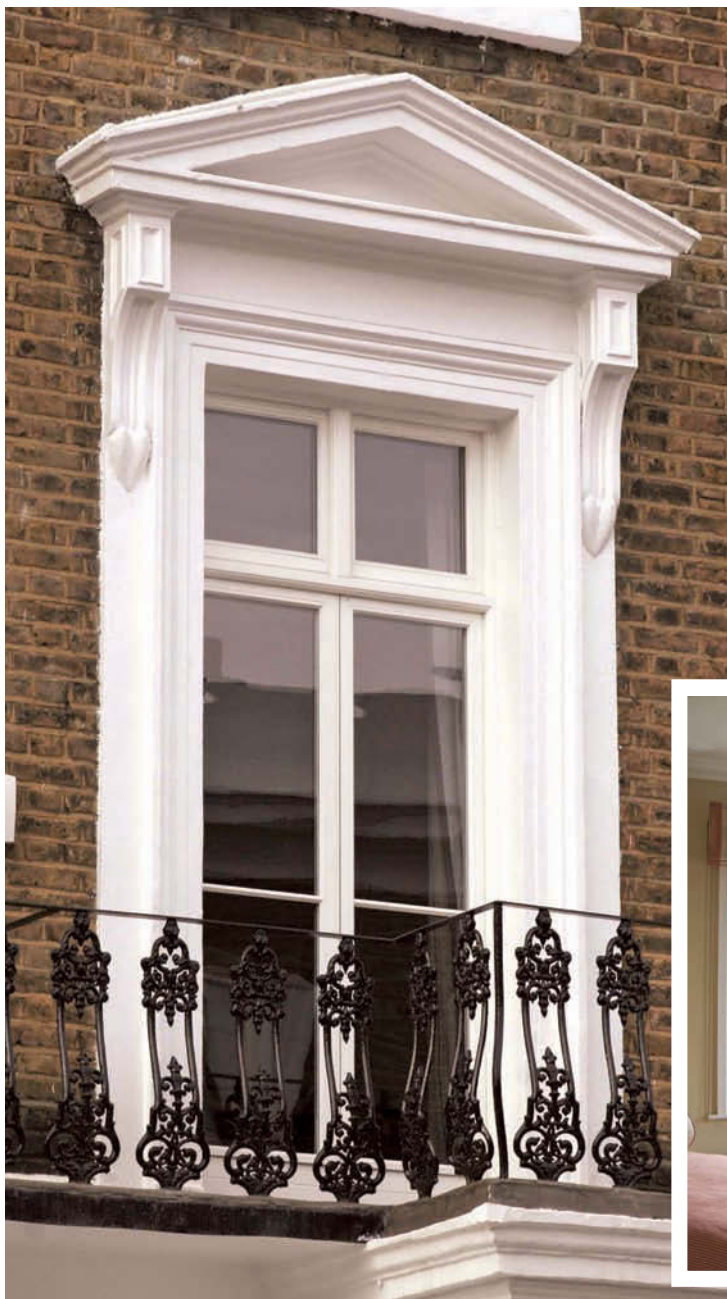
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Left
Timber balcony doorsets, part of the Conservation range at Mumford & Wood.

Right
Lion knocker, Danico Brass.

Below
The Sash Window Workshop manufacture timber windows and doors to suit your individual requirements.



As well as the door itself, the furniture upon it was also carefully considered. Thanks to the introduction of the penny post in 1840, letter plates became a necessity, as did door numbers. The very wealthy opted for solid brass furniture, which would have been polished daily by their staff. The majority of letter plates, handles and knockers were formed from wrought or cast iron, which was then finished or painted to match the door.

If you don't own a period property with original Victorian features, or your doors are in a state of disrepair, there are many options available to let you add this statement feature to your home. Todd Doors' extensive range of high quality timber doors include period styles to suit your Victorian home. With traditional panelling and decorative raised mouldings, the Victorian, Canterbury Oak and Oxford Oak doors encompass the modern, practical needs of durability, fire protection and glazing whilst complementing the ambience of a period home.

CLEAR VIEW

Another crucial element of a front elevation is its windows. Twelve-paned, sliding sash windows with timber frames were standard in the 19th century, but when window tax was abolished in 1851, closely followed by glass duty in 1857, these were replaced by six and four-paned windows, creating a lighter, brighter interior. Bay and bow windows became popular thanks to these changes, and by the end of the century, most working-class houses had at least one bay window. The architectural elements around the windows became a focus for decoration, with cornices, gables, arches and shutters being popular choices.

Fortis & Hooke restores period windows to their former glory, with innovative ideas and a remarkable grasp of traditional methods of carpentry. Its team of experienced carpenters are able to repair even the most extensively damaged or decayed timber by using modern methods combined with old-fashioned know-

how. Or, if your windows are beyond repair, speak to the team at Old Manor Cottages. They design and manufacture windows and doors that are traditional in style, but which incorporate the latest technology, ensuring your windows are both in keeping with your home's period style and energy efficient.

USEFUL CONTACTS

Crittall Windows **01376 530 800**,
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20
YEARS

Heat of the moment

Discover how our ancestors beat the chill in the 19th century



The next time you're feeling the cold, spare a thought for your ancestors. The layered look, which comes in and out of fashion today, was an absolute necessity for rich and poor alike simply to keep warm. Instead of thermals and microfibres, beloved of dogwalkers and skiers, our great-great grandmothers battled the elements with layers of petticoats, chemises, jackets, shawls and capes over bodyshaping corsetry. Wealthy women had to take great care when sitting down so that their clothes would fall just so, without upsetting hoop skirts or showing a finely turned ankle.

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Victorian SPECIAL



Bottom Left A gas fire is a super way to keep your home cosy and we're always impressed by the superb innovation at Nu-Flame. **020 8254 6802, nu-flame.co.uk**

Bottom Right The Evita fireplace comes complete with a matching back panel and hearth in the exclusive Bianco Persiano Marble. From £1,790, at Montpellier. **01452 714 800, montpellier.co.uk**



Top Left For a traditional appeal, try Montpellier's Milano Fireplace with matching hearth and slips in limited edition Travertino Bianco, priced £1,590. **01452 714 800, montpellier.co.uk**

Top Right The curly ears on this lovingly restored cast-iron radiator will look splendid in any room. For similar pieces of heating history contact Salvage Doctor. **01403 266 400, salvagedoctor.com**



The main source of heat in the Victorian home was from a traditional open fire, which meant that one had to sit very close to the fire to get any benefit, as most of the heat rose straight up the chimney. Just as today's homeowners can get very excited about having a statement kitchen installed, so too did our ancestors delight in using their mantelpieces as the hub of the home, displaying ornaments to show their social status to visitors.

Fireplace design varied considerably throughout the period, as designers took inspiration from highly decorative Gothic designs, and reacted against, then swung back, towards neoclassical forms. Perhaps, like today's consumers, wealthy Victorians suffered from the agony of too much choice and too much inspiration – especially when the Crystal Palace exhibition showed the treasures of the Empire to the world.

BACK TO BASICS

If you are the lucky owner of a Victorian house today, then you need to evaluate, with professional help, the state of the fireplaces and chimneys thoroughly. Never assume that you can simply light a fire in a house, just because there is a fireplace in situ! If you are keen to restore period details then your local salvage

HOW TO CHOOSE AN ANTIQUE SURROUND

Condition

Always check the condition of the fire surround before purchasing, as marble and cast iron surrounds are particularly susceptible to cracks. We would advise buying a surround that is already in good condition as restoration can be costly.

Size

Before choosing a surround, make sure you measure the size of your chimney breast. Most architectural salvage yards will be able to advise on suitable surrounds for the space.

Function

*If you intend to use the surround, we recommend checking with a heating engineer that the surround you would like to install is compatible with your flue. Talk to our experts, Ben and Helen Couchman, at **uk-heritage.co.uk***

yard is a good place to start, but it is vital to do some research to make sure your plans fit in with the architecture of your house as a whole.

Remember that dealers in architectural antiques and owners of salvage yards have a tremendous amount of experience and have advised on plenty of projects, so be honest with them about your plans and your level of knowledge. You may like the idea of recreating the look and feel of a homely Arts and Crafts fireplace, complete with decorative tiles, within a wooden surround. Or the dimensions of the room and your personal style may nudge you towards a reproduction cast iron fireplace. Bear in mind that the grandest fireplace and mantel in the house would have been in the parlour (the best sitting room) so you may want to push the boat out in your living room.

Finally, we need to thank our Victorian ancestors for developing what we know and love as central heating today. Thanks to developments in steam and hot water heating, radiators were available to the very well-off towards the end of the 19th century. You can pay homage to this great advance with a gorgeous reconditioned radiator from the Salvage Doctor, who can help you choose the right shape and size to suit your period home (**01403 266 400, salvagedoctor.com**).

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Left Hexham pattern tile, from £141.50 per sq m, Original Style.

Right Blenheim pattern tile, from £219.76 per sq m, Original Style.

Above Right Harfa flooring, Osmo UK
01296 481 220, osmouk.com



TAKE THE FLOOR

Keep your Victorian style up-to-date with our modern take on classic flooring

The Victorian era is often synonymous with gothic style and gloom, and while plenty of dark and grisly tales (both true and fictional) emerged from this iconic period, the style needn't be as morose. When it comes to flooring in particular, there's a wealth of monochrome Victorian tiles available, but here at Period Ideas, we've come up with a few ways to bring this classic trend into the 21st century.

PATTERN PERFECTION

Victorian tiles are a great way to enhance any room and shake up your scheme with an interesting pattern. There's an abundance of design options available, whether you want to stick to a traditional black and white theme, or opt for a variety of tones. Branching out with vibrant colours will breathe new life into a space without losing that Victorian feel, while experimenting with scale allows for a more modern look. Tiles with large prints create dramatic impact and can really open up smaller

rooms (particularly if there's a lot of natural light), making them feel more spacious. But with busier, more intricate prints, there's a risk of making your scheme look cramped, so save these for larger areas where striking patterns won't be overcrowded.

BEST OF BOTH

Tiles with decorative Victorian designs can complement modern schemes, adding a touch of tradition to minimalist décor, so you can keep abreast of current trends while retaining a quintessential period feel. Bathrooms and hallways are popular areas to lay antique tiles in due to their clean and crisp appearance, but in kitchens, bedrooms and living rooms, floor tiles can also perfectly complete your scheme. Flooring can sometimes be overlooked when rethinking your interiors, but using featured tiles will set the tone for the rest of the room. You won't need to worry about the remaining décor either, as simple, subtle hues will highlight patterned flooring, making it stand out.

NATURAL FINISH

Wood flooring is another way to achieve an on-trend Victorian home, but maintenance is crucial. Osmo UK supplies a natural and environmentally-friendly alternative to wood finishing, perfect for flooring in period homes. Harfa flooring is great for a statement look and can be combined with a variety of styles and colours to suit your scheme. Harfa is finished with Osmo Polyx®-Oil, which provides protection for the surface, without detracting from the unique appearance.

Rustins also offers a variety of floor finishes for wood and other materials. Since 1924, the company has continued to develop, with a particular focus on wood finishing products, speciality paints and decorating sundries. The wealth of expertise and experience behind the business means it caters to many flooring types, including authentic Victorian floorboards – so you can maintain a traditional antique look in your period home with ease.

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EASTERN PROMISES

Discover how Victorian furniture designers fell for the Orient

When it comes to design, nothing is original. Interior designers frequently borrow elements from previous eras or from overseas, demonstrating our passion for the past as well as the exotic. Embracing pre-existing design isn't a new phenomenon, and has been happening for many centuries. The Victorians did it with flair, drawing inspiration from previous styles and from overseas. The result was an eclectic mix, which combined elements from a range of sources to create true statement pieces.

WELL-TRAVELLED TREASURE

By the time Queen Victoria came to the throne, a strong trade connection between Britain and China had been established. It was common for tradesmen to bring back souvenirs from their travels, which were then publicly exhibited. In 1842 Nathan Dunn, an American businessman and philanthropist, displayed his vast collection of pieces from China in London, which was the most comprehensive assortment of items from the East that Britain had ever seen.

In 1853, Japan followed China's lead and opened its borders, providing a fresh source of inspiration for the West. At the London International Exhibition in 1862, Japanese style was presented to a wider audience, with the majority of objects coming from the British minister in Japan, Rutherford Alcock. This display had a highly positive reception, and Eastern style began to find its way into the homes of Victorian Britain.

The first piece of Japanese-style furniture in Europe was designed by Edward William Goodwin in 1867. The sideboard, which was created by Goodwin for the dining room of his London home, was formed from dark mahogany, with grey paper panels in the style of embossed leather and silver-plated handles. Although it wasn't overly Japanese, the restrained and geometric characteristics of it captured the essence of Eastern design, and was the antithesis to the excesses of Victorian style.

Designers began to ebonise wooden pieces, to imitate the strong black look of Japanese lacquer. The structure of the furniture itself was

simple and elegant, with many straight lines and undecorated surfaces. Circular motifs were also popular, based on decorative crests known as 'mon'. When pieces were decorated, they featured stylised designs of images from nature, which were very common in Japanese art.

CAUGHT IN THE WEB

Thanks to the Industrial Revolution, manufacturing was radically changed, allowing mass production to satisfy the growing demands of Victorian home-owners. As such, plenty of Victorian furniture remains today. If you're thinking of investing, familiarise yourself with the era and the styles so that you know what to look out for. Labels and stamps are not commonplace in Victorian furniture, so it's crucial that you have an idea of what pieces are of value. Seek out items that are in good condition and have high-quality decorative elements. As well as auction houses and antiques fairs it's also worth checking the web, as there are many reputable dealers online with vast collections of beautiful, original pieces.

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Locked up

A recent study has revealed that almost a third of people leave a spare key somewhere on their property, despite the obvious security risks. With the number of break-ins using keys rising, the police are recommending the C500 Key Safe. It's perfect for allowing secure access to any home, whether that's for carers who may be visiting an elderly or disabled person, or for when you inevitably lose or forget your keys. A combination code opens the metal box that securely stores the keys inside – so you won't even need to carry them on you. For more information, call **01905 770 333** or visit keysafe.co.uk

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Freshen Up!

Banish the boredom of washing with some laundry room TLC

With the spring clean well under way, it's unlikely you've given much thought to sprucing up your laundry room. It may not see the same glamour and excitement as the kitchen and living room, but it's just as fundamental to your home. A laundry room should feel fresh and clean in appearance and aroma, so we've opted for crisp whites and neutrals, with the odd splash of colour to shake up the scheme. You'll be saving space, time and money as well as getting creative with your washing, so it will never be boring again! Plus, with a DIY ironing board and recipes for your own natural cleaning solutions, these easy projects will have you loving your laundry room in no time.



OUR MAKERS...

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Ironing table

YOU'LL NEED:

- Wooden table
- Fabric
- Table protector fabric
- Curtain interlining
- Nylon cord
- Spray mount
- Sewing machine and kit

1 Cut the curtain interlining and table protector fabric to fit the table top. Using spray adhesive, stick the protector fabric to the table first, followed by the interlining.

2 Trim the patterned fabric to the same dimension, but 4cm larger all the way around. Neaten the edge by overlocking or with a zigzag stitch, then fold in this neatened edge by 1cm, and stitch to make a channel, leaving a gap in one side.

3 Tie a safety pin to the end of the nylon cord, then feed it through the fabric channel. Place the cover over the table, then tighten to gather and tie the cord ends together.

MAKE YOUR OWN...

Linen water

In a large spray bottle, add 10 drops of essential oil and 60ml of vodka, shake, then leave it for a day to combine. Pour in a pint of distilled water and swill around to finish.

Liquid starch

You need two ingredients: corn starch and warm water. You can use anything from one tablespoon of corn starch and one pint of water, to four tablespoons per pint.

Iron cleaner

Pour white vinegar and salt (in a 1:1 ratio) into a saucepan, and gently heat until the salt has dissolved. Let it cool, then dab a rag into the solution and the iron's soleplate will buff up a treat!



Dish cloths

YOU'LL NEED:

- Hand towels
- Fabric, various designs
- Sewing machine and kit

1 Cut the hand towel into six equal pieces and trim the patterned fabric to the same measurements. Place one piece of towel and fabric right-sides facing, pin and stitch together, leaving a 5cm gap.

2 Snip the points off each corner to remove the excess bulk, then turn to the right side. Stitch the gap closed, then press and repeat for the other five dish cloths.

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QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Outer SPACE

Find out how to make the most of your room outdoors with our expert advice



Hello sunshine

I'd love to have a sun room but don't know where to start. Can you help?

Good for you! It is a great idea to make the most of the sun in your home, but do remember that the prolonged exposure to sunshine is likely to fade fabrics and furniture in the long run so you may want to consider how you dress your new room. Interiors, aside, you need to get an idea of how much budget to put aside for your project before you thinking about getting in touch with your local planning office. A good place to start is by contacting the team at Arboreta, a company which specialises in oak frame structures.

Susan Dickerson, Editor, Period Ideas
0800 288 8333, arboreta-oak.com

Number 1 fan

I'd like to have a ceiling fan in my conservatory. Could you tell me how much they cost to run?

Our Fantasia fans run off the standard lighting circuit (5 amp) and are very economical, costing approximately 5p for 8 hours at high speed – less than a 100w light bulb. Our low energy ceiling fans have a DC motor and use 60% less energy consumption than our usual fans. It's also worth knowing that the winter (reverse) setting on our fans re-circulates warm air trapped at ceiling level, eliminating cold spots and draughts and distributing room heat without creating a cooling draught. Used correctly, a fan can save as much as 10% on energy bills during colder months, so you can enjoy your conservatory all year around. Do contact us so we can advise you on the most appropriate fans for the size of your room.

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Barry Harper, HSP Garden Buildings

01638 583 814, hspgardenbuildings.com



Gimme shelter

I love eating out on my patio but I'd like some shelter from the elements. What do you suggest?

There are several options available on the market such as awnings and parasols that can provide shelter in certain conditions, however nothing provides all round shelter from the elements as well as a veranda. Using a design based on verandas commonly found in the Victorian era, we have come up with our Classic bespoke veranda. It is manufactured with an aluminium frame, has integral guttering and you can opt for glass or polycarbonate for the roof. Combined with lighting and outdoor heating the Classic veranda will allow you to dine al fresco, in all weathers.

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Look after your flock

I like the idea of a having an outbuilding which is unusual and distinctive. Any thoughts?

A shepherd hut could suit you right down to the ground. Originally conceived hundreds of years ago, shepherd huts became popular in the Victorian era. They were designed to provide a very basic kitchen, bedroom and living area for the shepherd whilst he was away from home, tending to his flock. Today the hut has come into

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George Bannister, Blackdown Shepherd Huts

01460 929 747, blackdownshepherdhuts.co.uk

Seating plan

What do I need to consider when choosing conservatory furniture?

Consider the overall room scheme, so that the materials, shape and style of your furniture will complement the look you are working towards. Although rattan, cane and banana leaf are all superb choices for your furniture, you will naturally have a preference in terms of colour and weave. It also makes sense to work with the architectural features of your room. As time goes by, you may wish to change the fabric on your conservatory seating by ordering an additional set of cushion covers. At Home Life Direct, we retain the cushion templates for all of our sofas so we can make new covers at any point in time, using fabrics of your choice.

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RockCoco chandelier, £439, Fatboy at Amara. **0800 587 7645, amara.com**



Gia chandelier, EPOA, Koket. **bykoket.com**



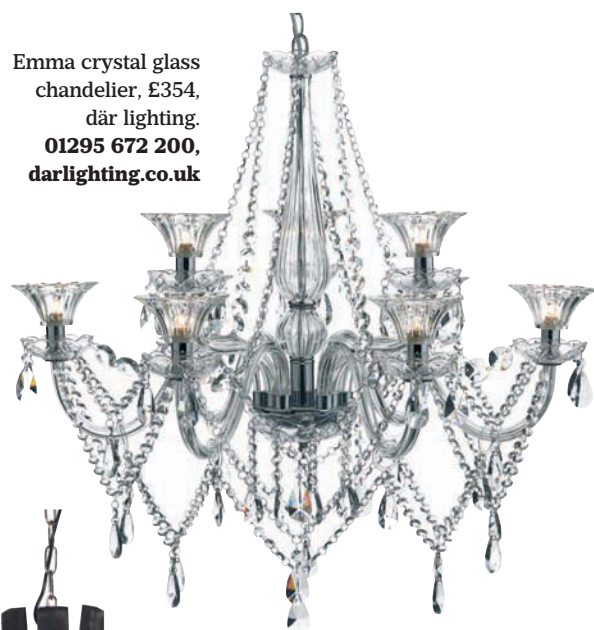
This contemporary twist on a traditional design features six brightly patterned cotton shades, contrasted with monochrome nickel-plated antlers. Hunting By Design chandelier, £280, The French Bedroom Company. **0845 644 8022, frenchbedroomcompany.co.uk**

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Antoinette five-arm chandelier in plum, £39, Tesco Direct. **0800 323 4050, tesco.com/direct**



Emma crystal glass chandelier, £354, dār lighting. **01295 672 200, darlighting.co.uk**

The free falling pendants of this breathtaking option catch the light from every angle, producing a mesmerising effect even when not lit. Rain shower chandelier, £1,502, Artisanti. **0345 259 1410, artisanti.com**



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Antiques & Vintage



MARGARET POWLING is one of Britain's best-loved antiques experts. She began collecting as a child and has a life-long love of fine china, beautiful books and

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Homes & Renovating



KATE FAULKNER is famous for her honest and direct approach to renovating and property buying. Drawing from her own experiences on

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Gardens & Special Offers



SARAH RAVEN is the queen bee of the British gardening scene. She has been running cooking, flower arranging, growing and gardening classes at

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Collectables

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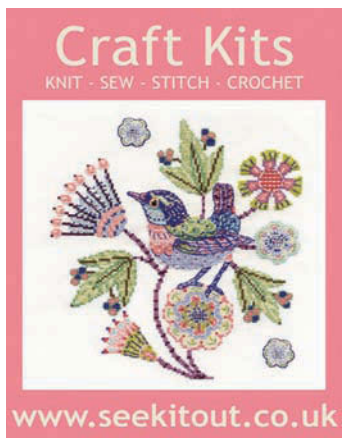


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Giving professional architects and builders picture briefs of what you want prevents any major communication errors, so the whole project can run more smoothly

KATE FAULKNER LESSONS I'VE LEARNED

Our property expert shares the secrets to adding an extension on your period home



For many of us, home improvement means making our properties more functional – and one of the best ways to do this is by adding

space with an extension. Before you do so though, there are a number of things to consider to ensure that your new room complements your home's existing style. Building on your property is a hefty task, and it can be difficult to obtain planning permission from your local council, particularly for owners of older properties. It is also important to make sure you're aware of the legislation that applies.

Keeping your home's architecture and local regulations in mind, think about whether you want to extend via a single or two-storey rear or side extension, or if other add-ons are more suitable, such as loft extensions, porches, basements and outbuildings. With single-storey extensions and conversions, it may be worth creating foundations that allow another level to be built in the future, so you can save money and help your property sell faster if you move.

Which option you go for depends on your budget, how it aesthetically works with your period home and what you plan to use the space for. The best way to work this out is to find properties similar to yours that have been extended sympathetically, or are just bigger. I've been on the lookout for farmhouses which are similar to my own home but slightly bigger, and then checking if they have been extended or if that's how they were originally built. A good rule of thumb to follow is to make the extension look as if it was there from the very start, which really helps retain (or increase) its value. When it comes to seeking planning permission, you can include photos of local or other homes that have the extra space you are looking for. I find giving professional architects and builders picture briefs of what I want my home to look like prevents any major communication errors, so the whole project can run more smoothly. This way, you can make sure your add-on looks like a natural part of your home, rather than sticking out like a sore thumb.

You'll also need to know what legal action you need to take to extend your home. There are still options open to you under permitted development rights if planning permission is difficult to obtain. Under these laws, you may be able to increase your space by double the amount usually allowed, but this can sometimes be a tougher process and building control is still required – so weigh up your options carefully. Visit planningportal.gov.uk to find out what rules and regulations you need to abide by.

Dig out the legal documents and property information you received when you bought your home too, so you're fully aware of its boundaries. With these, you can go through the fixtures, fittings and information forms to check if there are any border or shared access issues with your neighbours. You should also keep your water and insurance companies informed of your plans, as you may need permission to reroute drains or need home improvement insurance. In any case, keep a documented paper trail of e-mail receipts and printed permissions during your project (particularly regulation sign-off as you'll need this if you decide to sell) and ensure your tradespeople have their own insurance and warranties, which will guarantee their work for the future. Having an extension built and being able to call back the people responsible to fix any issues under warranty is invaluable, even if they have gone out of business or retired. Some companies offer warranties for up to 10 years, which is well worth having for peace of mind, or even to pass on if you sell.

KATE FAULKNER katefaulkner.co.uk

Kate is one of the UK's leading residential property experts. She writes *Which? Property* books and regularly appears on the BBC and ITV news as well as Radio 4 and 5live. Find out more at propertychecklists.co.uk

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